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**THE PAINTINGS OF THE ORDER OF ST JOHN IN MALTA:
HOSPITALLER ART COLLECTIONS AND PATRONAGE
FROM THE LATE FIFTEENTH CENTURY
TO THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY**

Theresa Vella

A dissertation submitted to the
University of Bristol
in accordance with the requirements
for the award of the degree of PhD in the
Faculty of Humanities

Department of History of Art
(Historical Studies)

June 2012

80,642 words

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the doctoral thesis is to demonstrate the role of the Hospitaller knights of the Order of St John as art patrons and collectors, and the extent to which works of art enabled internal relations between the Grand Masters of the Order and Hospitaller knights, and the extent to which art also enabled external relations with other entities and states through the language of gifts, bequests and cultural identity.

The study will enable an understanding of the development of the Order's art patronage and the growth of Hospitaller art collections, from the late sixteenth century to the early eighteenth century. These dates encompass the first commissions given to artists to embellish the magistral palace and the Conventual church in the 1570s, and the growth of a magistral art collection under successive Grand Masters.

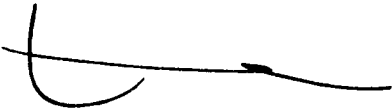
The research will also aim to situate Hospitaller art patronage and collecting within the broader history of art collecting in Europe, by highlighting factors that were specific to the institutional character of the Order of St John and the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience taken by Hospitaller knights.

The thesis will be informed by archival research on Hospitaller inventories. It will also build on studies that have been conducted on the Order's art patronage, and on the history of individual artists in Malta such as Caravaggio and Mattia Preti, as well as on research on the broader history of art collecting.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 't' followed by a horizontal line that ends in a small hook.

DATE: 13 NOV 2012

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research for this dissertation was made possible by the generous award of a Malta Government Scholarship Scheme grant towards my PhD studies in History of Art. I also thank Heritage Malta for their support throughout my studies.

In the course of following my studies at the University of Bristol, and the writing of this dissertation, I have drawn on the knowledge and expertise of many. In particular, I would like to express my gratitude to Dr Beth Williamson, my supervisor, and to Dr Tatiana String for their valued inspiration, guidance and unfailing support. I would also like to thank Dr Fernando Cervantes and Prof. Stephen Bann, who co-supervised my work, for their exchange of ideas and support, together with other lecturers, for providing rich and varied insights into diverse areas of my research.

I cannot hope to thank all those who have helped me to write the pages that follow, but some individuals deserve special mention. Judge Giovanni Bonello, Maroma Camilleri and Dr Ann Williams have generously given their time in discussing and providing access to material which would have otherwise been unavailable. I would also like to thank Prof. Carmel Cassar, Prof. John T. Spike, Dr Stephen C. Spiteri, Dr Theresa Vann and Dr Jevon Vella for sharing their valuable expertise in different areas of Hospitaller history.

I am also indebted to many others, in particular friends and colleagues at the National Library of Malta, the Museum of the Order of St John, London, Heritage Malta, Foundation of St John's Co-Cathedral, Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti, National Archives of Malta, Notarial Archives of Malta, Archives of the Cathedral Museum, the Office of the President of Malta, Midsea Books as well as the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, the Warburg Institute and the Courtauld Institute.

I must not fail to sincerely thank Dr Cath Hunt and Dr Louise Hughes, without whose help this dissertation would have been far more difficult to realize. I also wish to thank my colleagues at the University of Bristol whose companionship enriched my course of studies considerably.

Support and confidence comes from many sources, but most of all I must thank my parents, as well as my brother and his wife, Donald and Shirley Anne Sammut, for their unstinting support during my research while in Bristol, and especially my husband Denis Vella, without whom nothing worthwhile would have happened.

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I: INTRODUCTION

What makes Hospitaller art collecting interesting? This thesis sets out to answer the question by showing how art collections that were built up in the course of the lives of individual Hospitaller knights of the Order of St John, and subsequently dispersed, present an uncommon field of research in the history of art collecting in early modern Europe. Knighthood meant adherence to rules and regulations that were founded in the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Despite these determining principles, art patronage and collecting were also considered the norm within the life of a young nobleman who took those vows. The Order's statutory rules did cause tensions in the acquisition and disposal of works of art, rendering art collections as much a communal matter as a private one, yet Hospitaller knight collectors succeeded in accumulating magnificent collections within the parameters established by the Order's regulations.

Hospitaller art collections offered a highly-visible means of communicating a multi-faceted and nuanced statement of masculinity through the competing rivalries of magnificence, or its subversion through a pacifist slant on erudition and connoisseurship displayed through a collector's choices. Hospitaller collections were extraordinary in that they were knowingly ephemeral and, as necessitated by their vow of chastity and poverty, bound to be dispersed at a knight's death. This is in contrast to those belonging to secular collectors, of any class or rank, whose collections could plausibly be kept intact by heirs, thereby lasting long after the collector's death. Only the magistral collection remained intact and cumulative, and was enjoyed (but not inherited), by successive Grand Masters who resided in the magistral palace. Conversely, the dispersal of Hospitaller collections is also extraordinary for the efficiency of its execution, and the resultant geographic spread by which these works of art came to populate other collections.

The Hospitaller scenario is therefore an unusual one within the history of collecting, and has necessitated the exploration of alternative historical models within which to structure a discourse. One such a model has been found within the field of geographic studies, particularly within the relatively recent attention given by historic geographers to the collections of explorers, and to the cultural narrative that is embedded within their assembly of a variety of objects. The geographic model is also pertinent to the manner in which this thesis is presented. One can compare it to the present-day facility offered by Google Earth® to view the breadth of territory from a long-distance viewpoint and to subsequently zoom in to the minutiae of a street-view: in a similar manner, so does this thesis start by mapping out the European scenario against which art patronage and collecting unfolded from the mid-fifteenth century onwards, to then

proceed to zoom in to observe the organizational by-ways and topography of early modern Hospitaller collections, finally closing in on the indicators of taste and self-identity embedded within the texts of Hospitaller inventories.

This introductory chapter starts with an outline of the historical and geographical background to the main protagonists of the thesis, the Hospitaller knights of the Order of St John of Jerusalem, Rhodes and Malta. This chapter also situates the thesis within the broader literature on the history of art collecting and inventories. It introduces the primary sources: the Order's archival inventories found in Malta as well as existing paintings and other works of art from Hospitaller collections that are found in public collections in Malta and elsewhere. A geo-historical model of enquiry is further introduced through the lens of two examples that illustrate how primary and secondary sources will be brought to bear on filling out aspects of Hospitaller art collecting, identity and visual culture. A third example serves to illustrate how the movement of works of art to and from Malta, reflects a geographical model that is mirrored in the travels of Hospitaller knights to the Order's headquarters, as well as returning to the continent to head a commandery or priorate. The third example also highlights how paintings that once formed part of Hospitaller collections have continued to hold interest for art collectors and museums up to the present day.

The chapter is rounded off with a survey of the historiography on Art in Malta, indicating how this thesis will contribute to this particular area of research as well as to broader research relating to art collecting and patronage. It also concludes with an outline of the following chapters' main content.

1.1 The protagonists

In 1080, a hospital providing respite to pilgrims was established in Jerusalem by Benedictine monks to care for the growing number of Christians making the long and dangerous pilgrimage to the holy city (Fig. 1).¹ The hospital grew under the direction of Brother Gerard (d.1120), and in 1113 Pope Paschal II issued the bull *Pie postulatio voluntatis* that confirmed the independence of the Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem. Seven ancillary hospitals were set up at Bari, Otranto, Taranto, Messina, Pisa, Asti and Saint-Gilles, all sites, except Asti, that were also important embarkation places for the Holy Land. The Order's brothers and sisters (known as Hospitallers of St John or Knights Hospitallers) provided care to the poor and sick of any faith. They also took on the additional role of defending all Christians and others within their care whenever they were threatened, a role that led the Order to be regarded as troublemakers by the Saracens who, by 1187, drove the Order out of Jerusalem. The Hospitaller

¹ The main source of information on the Order's history before 1530 is H.J.A. Sire, *The Knights of Malta*, New Haven, 1994, 3-15.

Order subsequently established new headquarters on the coast of Palestine, before being pushed further west to Cyprus and then, in 1310, on to Rhodes.

For two centuries, the Order built up its naval might while fortifying the city of Rhodes. The bastions and high walls which they built, were to prove their unassailability in 1480, when the young Turkish emperor Mahomet II sent his Ottoman troops on a campaign to invade Italy, in order to consolidate his earlier victories in Constantinople and Eastern Europe. That year the Order held its ground in Rhodes, unlike Otranto, where the Turks succeeded in ravaging the Apulian region. However, the failure to capture Rhodes led Mahomet II to withdraw from his campaign. The victory of 1480 brought a new fame to the military order which was publicized throughout Latin Christendom by the beautifully illustrated and widely circulated account written by Guillaume Caoursin, the vice-chancellor of the Order.² With Caoursin's account of the Hospitaller knights' heroic resistance, the Order's popularity surged, and so did the numbers of its recruits of young noblemen, attracted by the Order's spirit of chivalry at the service of Christianity. The fortunes of the Order turned four decades later when in 1523 the walls of Rhodes fell to a second Turkish onslaught, sent by Mahomet's successor, the young Suleiman the Magnificent. The Order was allowed to leave the Island, with the honours of war, on its two ships the *Gran Carracca* and the *St Anna*.

For seven years, Grand Master Philippe Villiers de l'Isle Adam (1521-1534) roamed the courts of Europe, seeking assistance to reconquer Rhodes. Support came from the young Spanish emperor Charles V, who was devoted to the same secular struggle against Ottoman expansionism as the Order. His offer to L'Isle Adam, of the fiefdom of Malta,³ an ancient dependency of the Aragonese crown of Sicily, was accepted in 1530. From this date onwards, Hospitaller knights from urban centres of Europe periodically arrived on the Mediterranean island of Malta, drawn by the Order's chivalric code of honour, to fulfil their religious and military vows, and to settle there.

Suleiman's Ottoman troops continued to push towards the Western basin of the Mediterranean, and thus pursued the Order of St John, culminating in the Siege of Malta in May 1565. As Malta was besieged for five months by invading Turkish troops, the Knights of the Order of St John fought a battle that was crucial to their credibility, and to their very existence as a religious and military order. Having been expelled from its territories in the East Mediterranean, the once formidable military organisation needed to prove itself in the eyes of the leading courts of

² Guillaume Caoursin, *Obsidionis Rhodiae urbis descriptio*, Venice, after 1481. Caoursin's text was translated into English, German and Spanish, and its popularity was attested to by facsimile publications in the nineteenth century. Theresa M. Vann, 'John Kay, the 'Dread Turk' and the Siege of Rhodes', in *The Military Orders: History and Heritage*, vol. 3, ed. by V. Mallia Milanes, Aldershot, 2008, 245.

³ The Grand Master was thus made Governor of the Maltese people, a role he led directly and separately from his role as head of the Order of St John.

Europe, particularly the Spanish court and the Papacy, which closely followed the Siege of Malta. The victory of the Knights of St John that followed in September 1565 brought not only political gains to the Order and to the Maltese, but also a moral triumph that justified the Order's relevance to Christian Europe. The victory over Ottoman forces that occurred with the Siege of Malta in 1565, led the Order of St John to permanently establish itself in Malta, a process that was consolidated by the building of Valletta, an impregnable city designed on urban and military principles expounded by Renaissance architects and engineers.⁴

In the new city of Valletta, the Order chose to abandon the *Collachio*, the monastic-style cloister where knights lived separately from the rest of the population (Fig. 2). In Malta, Hospitaller knights did not live in a convent. However, the terms '*in convento*' and '*fuori convento*', that originated from the earlier living arrangements in Rhodes and in Jerusalem, continued to be used to denote a knight's presence in Malta or away from its shores. Novices and knights were identified by the language they spoke, or the region they came from, and were thus grouped within *langues*. This grouping was primarily intended for administrative purposes and not meant to reflect any notions of proto-nationhood,⁵ but it did provide Hospitaller knights with a link to their ethnic and geographic origins. French-speaking knights were grouped in three *langues* – those of Provence, Auvergne and France – even though French was already the standard language in all three regions. In contrast, knights from the various Italian states were grouped under one *langue*. Portuguese and Castilian knights were grouped with the *langue* of Castile and Leon, while Aragonese knights including those from Catalonia and Navarre, also had their own *langue*. The eight *langues* of the Order were each assigned their own *auberge*,⁶ a palatial residence for novices and young knights (Fig. 3). In Malta, the *auberges* were no longer clustered away as in Rhodes, but were built amongst secular residences belonging to Maltese owners and expatriate residents in the new city of Valletta.

Before taking his vows as a Knight of St John, a young man had to spend one year as a novice in Malta, living amongst brethren who spoke the same language in the *auberge* that provided a measure of communal life.⁷ The noviciate was a period of training, in military arts on land and at sea, as well as in religious instruction. This imparted to the professed Hospitaller knight the necessary martial skills to take on the Ottoman foe, while engendering piety to undertake

⁴ Roger de Giorgio, *A City by an Order*, Malta, 1998. Ref. also Thomas Jäger, 'The Art of Orthogonal Planning: Laparelli's Trigonometric Design of Valletta', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 63: 1, March 2004, 4-31.

⁵ Joseph M. Brincat, 'The Languages of the Knights: Legislation, Administration and Diplomacy in a Multilingual State (14th – 16th centuries)', in *Language and Diplomacy*, ed. by J. Kurbalija and H. Slavik, Malta, 2001, 261-2.

⁶ Sire, *The Knights of Malta*, 32-33: 'The practice of living in small national residences [*auberges*] was introduced in Cyprus. A capitular decree of 1301 gave official standing to seven [later eight] 'Tongues' [*langues*], which in order of precedence were Provence, Auvergne, France, Spain [later split into the tongue of Aragon and the tongue of Castile, Portugal and Leon], Italy, England and Germany.'

⁷ Ann Williams, 'Boys will be Boys: The Problem of the Noviciate in the Order of St John in the late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries', in *Melitensium Amor: Festschrift in honour of Dun Gwann Azzopardi*, ed. by T. Cortis, T. Freller and L. Bugeja, Malta, 2002, 179-184.

charitable work in the Order's Hospital and amongst the needy, and building up the spiritual strength and discipline to survive pain, slavery and death for *La Religione*, the Faith.

Hospitaller knights could aspire to rise through the ranks by seniority, and to acquire a commandery or priory in one of the Order's many estates throughout Europe (Fig. 4). Once attained, a commandery provided a knight with an income until his death, though he was also obliged to maintain the estate, which in some locations included a hospice for pilgrims and a chapel. Thus the time spent in Malta as novice and knight became a period of formation and coalescence of Hospitaller values and cultural mores, customs that a knight would build on when transferring to a commandery. Once lodged in a commandery, a knight would be on his own, physically distant from his Order's headquarters yet in regular communication with his brethren in Malta.

Although Hospitaller *priori* and *commendatori* were spread around Europe, dotting territories from the Iberian peninsula in the West to the Prussian territories in the East, and from Scotland in the North Sea to Messina in the Mediterranean, knights were united with the Order in Malta in a kind of imagined community, a paradigm established by Benedict Anderson in defining the kinship afforded by religion as a prefiguration of the nation-state.⁸ The Order of St John was held together by its Rule of Charity and its Hospitals, its knights' vow of political allegiance to the Pope over all other monarchs, and the defence of orthodox Christianity, all underpinned by the chivalric code of honour, as the divinely ordained duty of noblemen. Yet it was also an imagined community whose identity was intricately woven with geography, located at the periphery of Christendom, fending off the Ottoman expansionist threat from the East.

Thus the pan-European character of the Order, with a central base in Malta, leads to the adoption of a geographical form of enquiry together with its intersections with chronological developments in the consideration of the materiality of Hospitaller art collections. The geo-historical model highlights the pivotal moments in the history of Hospitaller art collecting that correspond to the Order's moving away from medieval structures and systems, while adapting to the social, political and economic developments in Renaissance and early modern Europe.⁹

At the cross-roads of the Mediterranean, within the fortified walls of its new city, Valletta, the Order of St John regenerated itself, creating a self-identity modelled on that of the papal court and the royal courts of Europe, centred around the leading figure of the Grand Master. In this context, formed in the course of nearly three centuries until 1798, the magistral art collection,

⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, 1983, 19-20.

⁹ Recent scholarship that deals with the Order's chivalric values in conflict with eighteenth-century modernity is that by Aleks Farrugia, 'An Order in Decline? An alternative perspective', *Proceedings of History Week 2011*, Malta Historical Society, forthcoming publication. I thank the author for kindly giving me an advance copy of his paper.

and the individual collections that were brought together by Hospitaller knights, were facets of the self-fashioning of the early modern military Order and its noble members. These art collections are the subject of this thesis, which here aims to locate the art collecting history of Hospitaller knights within the broader narrative of European art collecting history, as mediated through its trans-regional presence and its adaptation of a humanist ethos to counter-reformation principles.

1.2 Art collections and their inventories

The history of art collecting became a new focus of academic interest with the publication, in 1962, of Francis Haskell's seminal book, *Patrons and Painters: Art and Society in Baroque Italy*, followed by a revised edition in 1980.¹⁰ Scholarly attention was drawn to the major role played by monarchs and dukes, as well as bankers and merchants, popes and cardinals, in establishing the political, economic and social scope of art patronage, particularly through the accumulation of artistic treasures from antiquity. Haskell focused on Baroque Italy, adopting a geo-historical perspective with Rome at its centre while tracing the history of art collecting in terms of centres and peripheries within Italian borders. For this reason, the Order of St John in Malta is therefore only indirectly represented through the frequent mentions of the Hospitaller artist, Mattia Preti, and his relationship with patrons in Italy.

More importantly, Haskell drew attention to the practice of art collecting and the inventories that document the nature of art collections. Together with the works of art themselves, which are today found in public museums and galleries as well as others in private collections, the primary sources of information for the history of art collecting are the archival inventories, although often they have merely been tapped for their attestation to the provenances of specific works of art.¹¹ Haskell's model was followed by Mary Hollingsworth, who provided an exhaustive background to the roots of Baroque patronage in Renaissance and sixteenth century patronage, yet keeping to the same geographical boundaries as Haskell.¹² More recently, collection studies have been shown a new perspective deriving from the seminal influence of

¹⁰ Francis Haskell, *Patrons and Painters: a study in the relations between Italian art and society in the age of the Baroque*, London, 1980. Three years later a seminal symposium on cabinets of curiosities was held at Oxford, triggering a new area of art historical research that culminated in the 1989 launch of the *Journal of the History of Collections*. Ref also Chapter II.

¹¹ Particular attention has been paid to inventories that described royal or ducal collections in Italy, Madrid and London, while other studies have started on patrician and mercantile art collectors in Italy and France. Jonathan Brown, *Kings & connoisseurs: collecting art in seventeenth-century Europe*, New Haven & London, 1995; Jill Burke, *Changing Patrons: social identity and the visual arts in Renaissance Florence*, Pennsylvania, 2004; Cristina de Benedictis, *Per la storia del Collezionismo Italiano: fonti e documenti con 129 tavole fuori testo*, Milan, 2010; and Francesca Cappelletti, *Decorazione e collezionismo a Roma nel Seicento: vicende di artisti, committenti, mercanti*, Michigan, 2003.

¹² Mary Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Renaissance Italy: From 1400 to the Early Sixteenth Century*, Baltimore, 1995, and *Patronage in Sixteenth Century Italy*, London, 1996.

ducal patronage emanating from the Burgundian Netherlands towards European courts in the fifteenth century.¹³

Nowadays, art historical investigation is turning to inventories with broader forms of enquiry, seeking to inform the social history of art,¹⁴ to explore the intellectual and medical foundations of the development of art collections,¹⁵ to flesh out a better understanding of the art collector's intent and practice,¹⁶ as well as to expand the range of case studies to include women collectors and art patrons.¹⁷ Studies on the collecting practices of Isabella d'Este in turn-of-the-century Italy, Margaret of Austria in sixteenth-century Flanders and Queen Christina in seventeenth-century Sweden and Rome, have demonstrated how art collecting has contributed to the self-fashioning of the identity of powerful patrons, and how it served to bridge the personal lives of collectors with the public lives of the persona they wished to project through their collections and artistic patronage.

In an excitingly new development making use of archival sources, inventories have also been investigated by historical geographers. This has led to the exploration of relationships between archival texts and the collected objects mentioned therein, in order to uncover alternative conceptions of space, place and identity. In an essay relating to museums and the future of collecting, Rebecca Duclos established how collections of material and immaterial objects, ranging from history to installation art and poetry, can be shown, through museological practice, to hold a uniquely 'cartographic' power, in securing a sense of place and in situating a collector's notion of self.¹⁸ Similarly, in the 2011 issue of the *Journal of the History of Collecting*, Alessandra Russo has identified how the South American treasures sent to Spain by Hernando Cortez in the sixteenth century, most of which are only known through the inventory that accompanied the consignments, helped to make visible the unmapped new land to the Spanish Imperial Court. Russo has interpreted Cortez's letters and inventories by studying their capacity to evoke a 'spatial narrative' in the imaginative mapping of Mexico.¹⁹

This geo-historical paradigm has now been applied to this thesis. The paradigm has permitted the exploration of a model that illustrates and explains the creation, growth, and dispersal of

¹³ Marina Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance: Burgundian Arts across Europe*, Cambridge, 2002.

¹⁴ Christina Normore, 'On the Archival Rhetoric of inventories: Some records of the Valois Burgundian Court', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 23: 2, 2011, 215-227.

¹⁵ Frances Gage, 'Exercise for Mind and Body: Giulio Mancini, Collecting, and the Beholding of Landscape Painting in the Seventeenth Century', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 61, 2008, 1167-1207, amongst others.

¹⁶ Dagmar Eichberger and Lisa Beaven, 'Family Members and Political Allies: The Portrait Collection of Margaret of Austria', *Art Bulletin*, 77: 2, June 1995, is one example.

¹⁷ Jaynie Anderson, 'Rewriting the History of Art Patronage', *Renaissance Studies*, 10:2, June 1996, 129-138; Anderson drew attention to the disparity in attention paid to Isabella d'Este's collecting practice and that of other women art patrons such as Abbess Giovanna of Piacenza in the early sixteenth century, amongst others.

¹⁸ Rebecca Duclos, 'The cartographies of collecting', in *Museums and the Future of Collecting*, ed. by S. Knell, Aldershot, 1999, 84-102.

¹⁹ Alessandra Russo, 'Cortés's objects and the idea of New Spain: Inventories as spatial narratives', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 23: 2, 2011, 229-252.

numerous art collections, made up of works of art which gravitated to Malta, an island at the border of early modern western culture. The collections were owned by a religious and military community of Hospitaller knights, whose belongings and works of art were dispersed at the end of their lifetimes, a diasporic moment when works of art often returned back to the artistic centres where they originated from.

In adapting the model of geographical enquiry to a new set of parameters, this thesis demonstrates how early modern art collections and the inventories that describe them, can be seen to represent another body of material to be studied for the historical creation of topographies of space and identity. In focussing on art collections and related inventories belonging to the Hospitaller knights of the Order of St John of Malta in the early modern period, one may explore how early modern Hospitaller identity was permeated by geographical concepts. In effect, the word 'Hospitaller' represented a multi-national elitist community gathered at a strategic crossroads in the Mediterranean. Correspondences between the history of art collecting and geographical enquiry can be shown to establish points of cohesion and commonality that identify the main characteristics of Hospitaller collecting practice, thereby allowing a discussion of the concept of 'Hospitaller art collecting' that goes further than headlining the mere act of ownership. This contributes to scholarship on collecting by presenting a new typology of collector, and by demonstrating how the respective art collections held multiple purposes, from the self-fashioning of identity of individual knights to giving visible form to the imagined community of the Order of St John. In surveying the contours of Hospitaller cultural identity embodied in art collections, one may map the proximities and distances by which such an identity was defined.²⁰

1.2.1 *The primary sources of information on Hospitaller art collections: The inventories*

The thesis has its foundations in the first systematic study of Hospitaller archives kept in the Maltese archives of the Order of St John.²¹ The findings are discussed in Chapters III to VII. Hospitaller art inventories and bequests formed part of the process termed *disproprialmento*, the dispossession of a knight's belongings and their dispersal, by the Treasury of the Order. The study of the *disproprialmenti* has been complemented by the material evidence of paintings and other works of art known to have once formed part of Hospitaller collections. Secondary sources on art collecting and patronage in early modern Malta and other European urban centres, supplement the interpretation of findings drawn from the primary sources.

²⁰ The volumes containing Hospitaller inventories are themselves suggestive of geographical methodology as they are divided and bound by *langue* or language spoken, indicating the lands that they hailed from. However the grouping has also been shown to be so for administrative purposes; refer to n.5 above.

²¹ Refer to Chapter V for a full explanation of the nature of the *disproprialmento*, and the archival documentation that the process generated. The volumes are catalogued as AOM 931 (volume number). Throughout this thesis the individual *disproprialmento* is referred to in the following way: AOM 931 (volume number) No. [*disproprialmento* number] e.g. AOM 931 (31) No. 16, referring to the *disproprialmento* of Fra Gio Batta Brancaccio.

Hospitaller inventories are grouped and organized in terms of the Order's statutory obligations and are therefore structured in a sufficiently similar manner to permit comparative analyses. Each inventory reflects the final state of an art collection, as the long-cultivated result of a Hospitaller knight's aesthetic taste and judgement. Each inventory encapsulates the years of discernment that went into refining the quality of the knight's art collection. An inventory may therefore be read as a completed map that demarcates the picturing of a Hospitaller's own identity. For this reason, the inventories do not reveal the *process* of a visual cultural formation, but only the *final state* of a collection. The textual information specific to paintings or sculptures is limited to the title, or subject, of a work of art, or to the medium, or to other tangible or visible qualities.

Thus, the Hospitaller inventories invite a closer scrutiny of the naming of the works of art, through the titles, and occasionally themes, that are listed. Although the inventories fall short of enabling any formalistic enquiry on the paintings themselves, a comparative analysis of the titles reveals the subjects that frequently surface in the inventories, and permits a survey of the various pictorial themes that inhabited Hospitaller imagination.

1.3 Three geo-historical examples

Below are three examples that hold in common a correspondence between Hospitaller identity and geography. The artistic themes that recur in the inventories permit their consideration as leitmotifs in mapping the Hospitaller imagination. These examples serve to illustrate the comparative kind of discourse that can be engaged in identifying the nature of Hospitaller art collecting discussed in the following chapters.

1.3.1 *Illustrating spiritual geography*

The first example is based exclusively on textual sources provided by the inventories. It offers a comparative study of two categories of paintings that frequently recur in Hospitaller collections: these are *devotional images of saints*, or more specifically hermit saints and city saints (Fig. 5). They are here considered for their suggestive capacity to evoke the imagined geographies of physical distance and spiritual proximity.

In studying inventories of Hospitaller art collections, one is struck by the frequent listing of devotional images of saints.²² While this may at first appear to be an expected outcome of the

²² The majority of inventories contain devotional images of saints, besides pictures of the Madonna and Child that are found in practically all the inventories. These are discussed in Chapter VII.

religious vows taken by Hospitaller knights,²³ it also provides an area of study of the material form of imagined geographies mediated through the apparatus of the devotional image. Such distinct pictorial themes, indicated through their title, could reinforce a form of geographic awareness within the context of an assembled art collection.

Depictions of St John the Baptist in the desert, as the Order's patron saint, held specific relevance to Hospitaller knights, whose inventories reveal several mentions of this pictorial theme.²⁴ The high altar of the Order's Conventual church was adorned with 'The Baptism of Christ', first as a painting and later as a marble sculpture. The patron saint's life, martyrdom and apotheosis, adorned the vault and apse of the Conventual church, while the high altar of the church's Oratory was dominated by the Beheading of the Baptist, the single largest painting by Caravaggio. The magistral collection included various paintings of St John. These included a Young St John the Baptist in the habit of the Order,²⁵ and a St John preaching by Mattia Preti,²⁶ while frescoes by Filippo Paladini, showing the life and martyrdom of the Baptist adorned the magistral chapel, together with an oil painting, a Virgin and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Saint Paul.

When this painting-subject is studied in the context of other devotional images of predominantly hermit saints that are named in Hospitaller inventories,²⁷ this leads one to consider a deeper level of significance, one that may be interpreted as a subtle intimation of geographic meaning. Paintings of St Jerome,²⁸ St Paul the Hermit, St Mary Magdalen/St Mary of Egypt,²⁹ St Anthony the Abbot, St Hilarion the Hermit,³⁰ and St Conrad the Hermit,³¹ amongst others,³² frequently appear in the inventories of Hospitaller collections. Images of St John the Baptist and other hermit saints, oblivious to deprivation in a life of meditation and penitence spent in the desert, may have reinforced the nuanced geography of outermost peripheries, through the desert-

²³ The veneration of 'local and international saints' was re-affirmed by the Council of Trent by 1563, emphasizing their role as models of Christian life. Robert Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700: A Reassessment of the Counter Reformation*, London, 1995, 113-4.

²⁴ This is covered in Chapter VII.2.2., 'Joannite Imagery'.

²⁵ Blanch Lintom-Simmons, *Description of the Governor's Palaces in Malta*, Malta, 1895, 144; Cat. No. 121, St John the Baptist as a boy – wearing the tunic of the Order.

²⁶ On the Palace painting, refer to NAM, Duplicate Despatches, vol III, despatch dated 14 March 1823, transcribed in Lorenzo Schiavone, 'I Tesori d'Arte nel Palazzo Magistrale di Valletta nel 1826', *Il Delfino*, 85 (September/October 1985) 7-15; Cat. No. 46: 'altro ad olio, alto palmi 5½, largo palmi 4½, San Giovanni che predica, scuola del Mattias'.

²⁷ AOM 931 (28) No. 13, f.92: Fra Antonio de Lucia (Malta, 1667) owned three paintings of hermit saints, 'La Madalena/ S. Giofanni/ S. Gerfonimo'; AOM 931 (32) No. 3, f.25: Fra Don Andrea Marciano had a series of paintings of hermit saints, 'S. Ant.o Abbate/ S. Pietro/ S. Geronimo/ S. Paolo Eremita/ S. Ilarione'.

²⁸ AOM 931 (12) No. 5, f.17v: Fra Rene Vexel du Tertre, 'St Jerosme'; AOM 931 (4) No. 9, f.105: Fr Don Manuel Arias, 'S. Geronimo'.

²⁹ AOM 931 (38) No. 10 f.36v: Fra Guidotto Maria di Casamassimi, 'Sta Maria Egiziaca'.

³⁰ AOM 931 (32) No. 3, f.25, Fra Don Andrea Marciano had a series of paintings of hermit saints, 'S. Ant.o Abbate/ S. Pietro/ S. Geronimo/ S. Paolo Eremita/ S. Ilarione'.

³¹ AOM 931 (31) No 9, f.46: Fra Silvio Sortino, 'San Corrado Eremita'.

³² AOM 931 (34) No. 10, f.69: Fra Davide Cocco Palmeri, 'Il Transito di S. Onofrio/ S. Paolo p.mo Eremita/ La Maddalena penitente'; AOM 931 (28) No.6 f.32, Fra Cesare Lopez, 'la Maddalena/ S. Onofrio/ S. Geronimo mezza figura/ La Madalena, mezza figura'.

wilderness that was no-man's-land between civilization and terror.³³ In this manner, the image of the hermit saint could represent the embodiment of the geography of distance, prefiguring the Hospitaller knight situated at the outermost edge of Christian civilization, dedicated to its defence against the terror of Ottoman military strength.

A similarly connotative interpretation of devotional paintings may be seen in those images of saints with a more explicitly geographic link to cities. Through a tradition with its roots in the early medieval period, the urban patron saint embodied a discourse about real, material geography. As protectors of a city and its community, patron saints and their imaging represented the inter-twining of identity and place.³⁴ The images of city-saints that frequently appear in Hospitaller inventories are often listed with their respective cities, such as St Catherine of Siena, St Francis of Assisi,³⁵ St Nicholas of Tolentino,³⁶ St Dominic in Soriano,³⁷ Our Lady of Monserrat,³⁸ Our Lady of Pilar,³⁹ and St Peter of Alcantara.⁴⁰ Other city-saints held implied links with states such as St Casimir of Poland,⁴¹ and St Januarius of Naples,⁴² amongst others.⁴³ In a related manner, one may quote the Holy Shroud of Turin and its representation, as a painting or possibly as a replica, being included in Hospitaller inventories in a manner that links its owner to the Piedmontese capital.⁴⁴ In the early sixteenth century, the idea of the urban patron saint was described by the humanist hagiographer, Giovanni Flaminio:

‘We can see that by a great gift of Heaven it has come about that every city has been divinely allotted some saint as guardian and protector. Rightly it awards him honour and worship at all times, but especially in uncertain or dangerous circumstances it has recourse to him as protector and defender. This is so well known in all cities that there is no need to give examples. For although it can be believed that all those blessed spirits which enjoy eternity

³³ In the centuries preceding the arrival of the Order of St John in Malta, the islands were regularly used as a place of exile, mainly for the banishment of Sicilians. Stanley Fiorini, ‘Malta in 1530’, in *Hospitaller Malta*, 112-3. Anthony Luttrell has pointed out that the use by Dante and other contemporary writers of the word ‘Malta’ in the sense of prison may have originated from the fact that Malta was then regularly used as a place of exile; Anthony Luttrell ‘Approaches to Medieval Malta’, in *Medieval Malta: Studies on Malta before the Knights*, London, 1975, 36, quoted in Fiorini, ‘Malta in 1530’, in *Hospitaller Malta*, 112 fn.6.

³⁴ Diana Webb, *Patrons and Defenders: The Saints in the Italian City-states*, London, 1996, 2-3.

³⁵ AOM 931 (37) No. 16, f.65: Fra Pio Francesco Gori, ‘*S. Caterina da Siena avanti il Crocefisso/S. Francesco d’Assisi/S. Francesco di Paola*’.

³⁶ AOM 931 (13) no. 24, f.90: Fra Joseph de Panisse Boisselet, ‘*St Nicolas de Tolantin/ St Dominique Surjanne*’.

³⁷ AOM 931 (4) No. 10, f.129: Fra Pietro Davalos Maca y Rocamora, ‘*Un quadro de Sto Domingo de Soriano*’.

³⁸ AOM 931 (3) No. 34, f.350: Fra Don Rodrigo Manuel Brun, ‘*Un effigie della Beata Verg.e di Monserrat*’.

³⁹ AOM 931 (10) No. 3, f.32: Fra Miguez Doz owned two paintings of Our Lady of Pilar, ‘*La Virgen del Pilar de Maroneria / ... La Virgen del Pilar hecha en Trapani*’. Trapani, Sicily, is often mentioned as a source of devotional paintings.

⁴⁰ AOM 927 f.230: Balì D. Andrea Minutolo, ‘*S. Pietro d’Alcantara*’.

⁴¹ AOM 931 (4) No. 9, f.105: Fra Don Manuel Arias, ‘*Medio cuerpo del S.to Rey Casimiro*’; Fra Don Arias also owned eight paintings of the saints of the Order ‘*Cuerpos Entero de los santos de la Relixion de San Juan*’.

⁴² AOM 931 (28) No.6 f.32, Fra Cesare Lopez, ‘*S. Gennaro e la Madonna col bambino*’; AOM 931 (32) No. 3, f.25: Fra Don Andrea Marciano, ‘*S. Gennaro Vescovo di Benevento*’.

⁴³ AOM 931 (36) No. 20, f.200v: Fra Giulio Sansedoni (Perugia, 1719), ‘*Ritratto della Ven. S. Chiara di Todi [Perugia]*’; AOM 931 (37) No. 26, f.101v: Fra Bartolommeo Tommasi (1768), ‘*S. Margarita di Cortona*’; AOM 931 (38) No. 10, f.36v: Fra Guidotto Maria di Casamassimi (1771), ‘*L’Effigie di S. Nicola Tolentino*’.

⁴⁴ AOM 931 (39) No. 30, f. 141: Fra Balì Giovanni Borgherini (d.Firenze, 1732), ‘*Lascio al [...]del Bene un quadretto di San Carlo Borromeo et altro quadretto rapp. la Santa Sindone con ornamenti*’.

with the angels care for Christians everywhere, it is none the less piously to be believed that there are very many of them who exercise a special care and protection over those places in which they were born, or where they lived for a long time, or suffered dire tortures and death for Christ, with happy results; or there are those, albeit foreign, whom the cities themselves have chosen as their patrons with a special cult and devotion.’⁴⁵

City saints and their cults have been discussed as early constructs of urban consciousness, serving to unite the inhabitants of a city, as well as colonies of those citizens in other regions.⁴⁶ Within the Hospitaller context, the network of chapels with their respective patron saints, attached to the Order’s commanderies and hospices, dotted the European map as markers of religious devotion and charity, linked by routes that converged on the Order’s headquarters in Malta. Devotional paintings of city-saints are thereby underpinned by a narrative of real geographies denoting individual Hospitaller aspirations and imagined geographies inhabited by the recollection of virtuous lives. They denote spiritual bridges linking Hospitaller knights in Malta with miraculous spaces in distant cities, as well as with the ‘other-worldly’ geography of the afterlife. Images of hermit saints and city saints thus held a form of agency that is rooted in the medieval formation of the Order of St John, and that provided one kind of boundary that delimited the Order as imagined community.

In both instances, devotional images are here being quoted only in terms of their recurring appearance in Hospitaller art collections. However, this fact may also serve to demonstrate the disposition of Hospitaller art collectors in preferring devotional subjects over other secular themes such as history painting, and mythological scenes. This aspect and others regarding devotional art are discussed further in Chapter VII. Future studies may explore whether this phenomenon provides an early landmark by which to signpost the start of early modern tensions in Hospitaller visual culture, reconfiguring its hierarchical medieval roots in reflecting a homogeneous Counter-Reformation community.

1.3.2 *Configuring a Hospitaller view*

The second example is based on a comparative analysis of both textual and material sources of another recurrent theme in Hospitaller collections: aerial landscape views of Malta (Fig. 6). These are listed in inventories as ‘*Prospettive*’, as distinct from ‘*paesaggio*’ that denotes landscape painting in the classical sense of the pastoral, idyllic or picturesque image. *Prospettive* represent one way in which the geographical imagination of Hospitaller knights was

⁴⁵ *Chronica Breviora aliaque monumenta faventina a Bernardino Azzurinio collecta*, ed. A. Messeri, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, n.ed., pp.338-9, quoted in Diana Webb, *Patrons and Defenders: The Saints in the Italian City States*, New York, 1996, 3.

⁴⁶ Lily Richards, ‘San Ranieri of Pisa’, *Art, Politics, and Civic Religion in Central Italy 1261-1352*, ed. by Joanna Cannon and Beth Williamson, Aldershot, 2000, 179-219.

embodied and represented through paintings of Malta. As aerial landscape views, *prospettive* give a bird's eye point of view, a seemingly 'mapped' one, onto land, or territory, in a manner that combined cartographic information, such as the layout of streets and the location of public squares and key buildings, with topographic information such as the presence of slopes and hills as well as relative heights of city walls and fortifications. The inclusion of harbour and sea helps to locate the Island in the viewer's mental image of the geography of the land. The sea serves to determine both its insularity and the means of arriving there, while at the same time hinting at other invisible lands beyond the horizon.

The earliest known depictions of Malta were essentially cartographic, and were prompted by the Order's acceptance of the Islands as a fiefdom from Charles V in 1530. As printed works published in Lyon, Rome, Venice, and the Netherlands, maps that located Malta at the middle of the Mediterranean were intended for wide distribution.⁴⁷ In 1565, the Siege of Malta prompted a spate of 'war-news' illustrations (Fig. 7), that blended cartographic information with figurative illustration of each event located in seemingly 'actual space'.⁴⁸

Following the building of the magistral palace's *piano nobile*, the first public secular art commission made by the Grand Master was inside the Grand Council Chamber, the depiction of the main events of the Siege of Malta (known as the Great Siege) and the resulting battle between the Order and the Ottoman army between May and September of 1565 (Fig. 8). This was commissioned in the contemporary spirit of glorifying and perpetuating the history of the Order of St John, embedding it in the victory that justified its existence to Christian Europe (Fig. 9). The task was entrusted to the Roman artist, Matteo Perez d'Aleccio, who was invited to Malta in 1576 for this express purpose, as well as to paint a number of altarpieces for the Conventual church of St John.

The communicative power of visual narrative was harnessed to ensure that the events of 1565 would be fixed in the collective memory of the Knights of the Order of St John. While the Great Siege frescoes teem with human figures, some identifiable by name, the one over-riding presence is that of the island of Malta, at times depicted by means of cartographic convention, at times in the more narrative convention of landscape. J.B. Harley has demonstrated how mapped images of landscape transformed the functional mode of cartography into the aesthetic mode of

⁴⁷ They spread to different parts of Europe where the revenue-generating territories and commanderies of the Order were located and where the individual Knights' families resided. Other maps, in manuscript form, were drawn by engineers of the Order illustrating their proposals for strengthening the defences of the harbour area, as well as their plans for the new city on the promontory overlooking the natural harbour. Albert Ganado, 'The Representation of Birgu and Fort St Angelo in Old Maps and Views' in *Birgu: A Maltese Maritime City*, Vol. II, ed. by L. Bugeja, M. Buhagiar and S. Fiorini, Malta, 1993, 553.

⁴⁸ Albert Ganado and Maurice Agius-Vadalà, *A Study in Depth of 143 Maps representing the Great Siege of Malta of 1565*, vol I, Malta, 1994.

mural art.⁴⁹ Such landscape views retained the values of maps, in the way that they encompassed manipulated forms of knowledge. As the first significant depiction of land, and landscape, in, and of, Malta, this mural cycle manifests in visual form, the Order's political and economic concerns that were to shape early modern Malta.⁵⁰ Through the superimposition of the pictorial narrative of the Great Siege over the depiction of Maltese land, the fresco cycle permanently bonded the historic event as the moment of moral legitimation of the Order's occupation of Malta. In this way, the subject of Land is transformed into an object to be perceived, and thus appropriated, in moral and political terms.

The frescoes held great interest amongst Hospitaller knights, and were well known to the Grand Master's counterparts in states overseas, namely Dukes and Princes whose ambassadors to Malta would have been hosted inside the Grand Council Chamber. Diplomatic visitors would be treated to a narrated or performed account of the tumultuous events of the Great Siege as they occurred in such a geographically sensitive location. In 1588, aware of the international interest in the Great Siege, Perez d'Aleccio also engraved his compositions for publication in Rome, and dedicated his book to Cardinal Ferdinando de Medici.⁵¹ In 1631, the series was re-engraved by the Roman publisher Antonio Lucini, while a third set were published in Bologna in 1636. That the Great Siege of Malta continued to matter sufficiently to generate a widely sought set of engravings bears testimony to the fame that the Order enjoyed after its victory, as well as to the vibrancy of the Hospitaller network. Another known instance is the copy of the entire cycle, commissioned around 1660, by Fra Jean Bertrand de Luppé (1586-1664) for his brother in La Cassagne, France, to be displayed in his newly-built chateau's grand hall.⁵² Interestingly, the unknown painter derived his compositions from the engravings, leaving out the figural Virtues that framed the episodes in the *Sala del Gran Consiglio* in the magistral palace (Fig. 10).

Prospettive showing bird's eye views of Valletta and the Grand Harbour of Malta are mentioned in several Hospitaller inventories of collections in Malta and in the Order's Europe-wide commanderies.⁵³ There is also material evidence provided by paintings of Malta in museums and collections, to support the conclusion drawn from the inventories, that from the late

⁴⁹ J.B. Harley, 'Maps, knowledge, and power', in *The Iconography of Landscape*, ed. by D. Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels, 2004, 277-312.

⁵⁰ Theresa Vella, *The Visual Representation of Land between the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: an early modern Preoccupation with Land in European Societies* (unpublished master's thesis, University of Malta, 1999).

⁵¹ Matteo Perez d'Aleccio, *Disegni della Guerra assedio et assalti dati dall'Armata Turchesa all'Isola di Malta, l'Anno MDLXV*, Rome, 1582.

⁵² Theresa Vella, 'The 1565 Great Siege Frescos in The Palace, Valletta', in *Celebratio Amicitiae*, 193-205. The hall measures thirteen metres by nine metres, with a ceiling approximately four metres from the ground, and necessitated a proportional reduction in the size of the compositions.

⁵³ AOM 931 (3) No. 26, f.242v: Fra Bali Diego Veterano, '*imapa de Malta*'; AOM 931 (32) No. 12, f.131: Fra Domenico Cleria (1695), '*Una quatro grande dell'isola di Malta*'. AOM 931 (3) No. 31, f.308: Fra Don Martin Novar (1692), '*Due prospettive della Città Valletta fatta a penna*'. AOM 931 (4) No. 9, f.106v: Fra Don Manuel Arias (1703, Seville), '*Dos quadro prolongado de Malta en perspective*'.

sixteenth century to the eighteenth, compositions of pictorial representations of Malta executed during the time of the Order continued to show a distant point of view, encompassing the totality of the Island's perimeter. With respect to the land itself, the urban topography of Valletta is defined and delineated by the fortification walls that defend it, embodying the military identity of Hospitaller Malta. The militarized landscape of Hospitaller Malta is discussed further in Chapter Seven.

1.3.3 *Conceptual proximities and physical distances*

The third example manifests itself in the inventories and interacts with other historical sources of information together with the material evidence provided by the works of art themselves, in illustrating the *mobility* of Hospitaller collections. In this instance, adopting the geographical model of the topographical survey is appropriate for a discussion of the trails of transferral of Hospitaller paintings from European art centres to Malta, and back to European art collections. The survey also permits one form of picturing 'museum geographies', a term coined by the historical-geographer Veronica della Dora to qualify the manner in which famous works of art travelled from private collections, to auctions, and museums as well as through the extensive network of exhibition loans.⁵⁴

The Great Siege cycle compositions described above were also to travel to other European collections in a portable form, as the oil sketches on canvas, possibly executed by Perez d'Aleccio, to anticipate the final compositions in fresco or painted afterwards as copies (Fig. 11). The paintings were to travel by a route that can be presented in the form of a hypothetical map that simultaneously signposts the different meanings that the paintings have conveyed in the four centuries since their creation. Such a map (Fig. 12) can be evoked by means of a brief account of the paintings' movements: the oil sketches remained for a time in the Grand Master's collection, and were inherited by subsequent Grand Masters as part of the Palace art collection. By 1623, the Portuguese Grand Master Mendes de Vasconcellos (1622-1623) included these twelve paintings as part of his documented bequest, leaving them to the executor of his *disproprio*amento, Fra Giocondo Accarigi, with the express instruction of sending them to his [Accarigi's] house in Siena.⁵⁵ Accarigi fulfilled this part of the bequest, yet did not feel compelled to keep them as a memento of the Grand Master's affection. Not long after acquiring the paintings, Accarigi appears to have disposed of them, though it is not known whether he did so through the art market, or whether he presented them as a gift. Within a short time, the oil paintings surfaced in London, forming part of the magnificent collection of Charles I.⁵⁶ The

⁵⁴ Veronica della Dora, 'Travelling landscape-objects', *Progress in Human Geography*, 33: 3, 2009, 343.

⁵⁵ AOM 924 'A' (3) f.25: 'Dodecinni quadri nella quale è dipinto l'*Assedio di Malta* con conditione che le debbia mandare in Siena in casa sua per memoria dell'affettione n.ra verso la persona sua [Fra Giocondo Accarigi]'.

⁵⁶ The royal insignia in wax is still present on the back of the paintings' canvas; information kindly provided by Mr Robert Blythe, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

paintings survived the dispersal of the royal collection in the famed sales that took place in 1649,⁵⁷ and remained in England. Little is known of the fate of the oil paintings until the turn of the twentieth century, when eight of them came into the collection of the shipping magnate Sir James Caird (1864-1954).⁵⁸ In 1934, the Caird collection of maritime artefacts and paintings, including the Perez d'Aleccio oil paintings, were donated to the newly-established National Maritime Museum in Greenwich (Fig. 13).⁵⁹

The hypothetical map of these paintings' known journey, from Malta to Siena and on to London illustrates the conceptual proximity between one art collector and the next, yet to whom the paintings also spoke in different ways: in their *mobility* the Great Siege oil paintings embody the changing topography of cultural meanings in the imaginations of a sequence of owners. Starting out from the Hospitaller context, the materiality of paintings gave visible form to the diverse meanings with which different viewers beheld and interacted with the works of art.⁶⁰ The paintings came into existence as the *magnum opus* of the sixteenth-century artist Matteo Perez d'Aleccio; they then came to signify the magistral status of patrons from Grand Master de La Cassière (1572-1581) to Grand Master Mendes de Vasconcellos (1622-1623). By 1623 the oil sketches were prized as a gift and memento to a high-ranking Hospitaller knight, who shortly after re-qualified their worth as assets. Their acquisition by Charles I added a new lustre of desirability to the oil paintings, a lustre that rubbed off on a new collector at the turn of the twentieth century. By the 1930s, these paintings came to embody one man's philanthropy to a nation, taking on a new mantle of British national art treasures and heritage.

This hypothetical map thus symbolizes differences between one art collector and the next. Yet these are the same set of art objects. How can such a site-specific, viewer-specific set of images move out of one conceptual zone into new contexts of changing variables? The answers to such questions can be found in discourses relating to the display of art objects within a museum context, and the preservation of their status as works of art. In one such discourse on changing modes of reception, David Carrier adopts a cartographic model to illustrate the transfer of Piero della Francesca's famed painting, *The Flagellation of Christ*, from Florence to London and to simultaneously explain the changing meanings that the altarpiece held between its installation as

⁵⁷ Jonathan Brown and John Elliott, eds, *The sale of the century: artistic relations between Spain and Great Britain, 1604 - 1655*, New Haven & London, 2002.

⁵⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir_James_Caird,_Baronet.

⁵⁹ <http://www.nmm.ac.uk/collections/explore/object.cfm?ID=BHC0252>. The eight oil-on-canvas paintings have been given inventory numbers from BHC0252 to BHC0259.

⁶⁰ Studies on the interaction between the work of art and the viewer were pioneered by Ernst H. Gombrich (*Art and Illusion*, c.1960), Michael Baxandall (*Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, 1972), Hans Belting (*Bild und Kult / Likeness and Presence*, c.1994) and David Freedberg (*The Power of Images*, 1989), amongst others, who moved away from the connoisseur- and market-driven concerns with authenticity, style and provenance, towards contextuality and 'the beholder's share'; Marcia B. Hall, Review: T. Frangenberg and R. Williams, eds. 'The Beholder: The Experience of Art in Early Modern Europe', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 60: 4, 2007, 1387-9.

an altarpiece, its removal, and its conversion from devotional object to art.⁶¹ Also, Eileen Hooper Greenhill has demonstrated how ‘meanings of objects are constructed according to the perspectives from which they are viewed and in relation to the discourses within which they are placed’.⁶² The metaphorical mapping of the movement of works of art from one context to another is a useful form of visualizing the changing contexts within which a group of pictures came to be found. The mapped diagram is itself a signifier of the variety of ways in which the Hospitaller paintings held changing meanings to their different collectors. It surveys the vivid ability of Hospitaller-related paintings to signify diverse values and meanings to collectors in various cities in different eras, up to the present day. More significantly, this historic route or road-map reminds us of the continuity in change that is pertinent to all the arts, thereby permitting the consideration of endowing the history of Hospitaller art collections with contemporary relevance and resonance.

To the afore-mentioned survey on the inventories that inform the main findings of this thesis, one should add a note on the works of art from Hospitaller collections which have survived to the present day and which bear witness to the diversity of cultural sources that influenced the collectors’ choices. These works of art are to be found today in the National Museum of Fine Arts of Malta, having been transferred to the national museum from the Palace of the Grand Master at the start of the twentieth century. Paintings of the fifteenth and sixteenth century from Flanders, the Netherlands, and Italy could only have been brought to Malta by knights of the Order, thereby underscoring the network of art world connections that had an impact on the island under Hospitaller rule.

These paintings lead to the consideration that until the mid-seventeenth century,⁶³ the majority of paintings, sculptures and other works of art that found their way into Hospitaller collections in Malta originated from European artistic centres, while only relatively few were acquired directly from artists practising in Malta at that time.⁶⁴ This observation is inferred from the works of art themselves, those that are predominantly attributed to artists or artists’ workshops that are known to have had historical links with the Order of St John through its embassies, priories and commanderies overseas. This observation is also supported by the very singularity of such paintings (had such an artist worked in Malta or had he or she received commissions directly from a Malta-based collector one would justifiably expect to find a second painting or more by the same artist or his or her studio). The arrival of continental works of art in Malta could have taken place when Hospitaller knights transferred their belongings in order to settle in

⁶¹ David Carrier, ‘Art Museums, Old Paintings and our Knowledge of the Past’, *History and Theory*, 40: 2, May 2001, 170-189.

⁶² Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the interpretation of visual culture*, Routledge, 2000, 76.

⁶³ The arrival of Mattia Preti in Malta in the early 1660s and his subsequent forty-year art practice changed the art market in Malta.

⁶⁴ For a survey on artists in Malta, ref. John Gash, ‘Painting and Sculpture in Early Modern Malta’, in *Hospitaller Malta*, 509-603.

Valletta. Another possibility, with knights who lived in a commandery, was the transport of their belongings to the *Comun Tesoro* after their death as part of the process of *dispropriamento*.⁶⁵

1.4 Other protagonists in the history of Hospitaller art collections

The Order of St John in Malta had a great impact on the political, social and economic history of the country and its population, and the patronage of art by Maltese society was one visible result of Hospitaller cultural influence. Towards the end of nearly three centuries of rule under the Grand Master of the Order of St John, Malta was described as a country of growing material prosperity, with an urban environment and a standard of living that was 'higher than anywhere else in the Mediterranean, [and that changed] life in this outpost of Europe dramatically'.⁶⁶ Carmel Cassar has demonstrated how, ever since the mid-sixteenth century, Maltese people in the harbour area and, soon after, those who moved to the new city of Valletta absorbed the cultural influence of the metropolitan Order,⁶⁷ quoting the testimony given in accounts by visitors to Malta such as Nicolo de Nicolai in 1551, and George Sandys in 1611.⁶⁸ The noble families residing in the old city of Mdina kept a political distance, though they too soon adopted the diplomatic language of art, ceremony and performance in their formal dealings with the Order and thereby to compete with the scions of Europe's nobility.⁶⁹ Similarly, the Cathedral Chapter of the diocese of Malta kept its own separate identity, yet competed strongly with the Order in artistic and architectural terms. As the single large organization in Malta before the arrival of the Order of St John, the Church had evidenced its presence on the Maltese landscape most conspicuously by the number of chapels that dotted the Maltese countryside, and by raising the most opulent building then known, the Cathedral in Mdina, eventually to be rivalled by the Order's Conventual church of St John.⁷⁰ By the first half of the seventeenth century, the Church in Malta continued to transform the Maltese townscape with its baroque churches topped by domes and bell towers. The subsequent demand for religious art, and the arrival of altarpieces from Sicily and other Italian artistic centres as well as other religious paintings by artists in Malta, led to the flourishing of a visual culture amongst the population.

⁶⁵ The latter instance is illustrated with the *dispropriamento* of Fra de Giovanni, who died in Messina, and whose paintings by Mattia Preti are known to have been displayed in the Palace up to the 1820s. Ref. Chapter III. Also, those belongings that formed part of a knight's patrimonial inheritance and indicated as such in his *spoglio*, would be returned to his family at his death, being also part of the conditions of a notarized agreement which would often be drawn up at the time of his joining the Order.

⁶⁶ Roderick Cavaliero, *The Last of the Crusaders*, Malta, 1960, 101 quoted in Carmel Cassar, 'Popular Perceptions and Values in Hospitaller Malta', *Hospitaller Malta*, 429-31.

⁶⁷ C. Cassar, *Popular Perceptions*, 429-31.

⁶⁸ Nicolo de Nicolai, *Le navigazioni et viaggi nella Turchia*, transl. by Francesco Flori de Lilla, Antwerp, 1576, 35, and George Sandys, *A relation of a journey begun Anno Domini 1610*, 4th ed., London, 1637, 234, both quoted in C. Cassar, *Popular Perceptions*, 429-31.

⁶⁹ Vicki-Ann Cremona, 'Spectacle and 'Civil Liturgies' in Malta during the Time of the Knights of St John', *Celebratio Amicitiae*, 103-118.

⁷⁰ Theresa Vella, *The Visual Representation of Land*, 63.

The Order's presence ushered in the growth of a new class to service the machinery of government, members of which were entrusted with responsible roles both in the government of the Maltese Islands, as well as providing the administrative and professional services required by the Order and its Hospitaller knights. This new social class was made up of aspiring Maltese, who moved from the country villages to Valletta and the satellite harbour towns of Senglea, Bormla (Cospicua) and Birgu (Vittoriosa), as well as the Rhodiots who had left their country with the Order in 1523, and others from Italy, Southern France and Greece. The metropolitan culture that was engendered by the multi-national members of the Order of St John, and by the expatriate workers from other Mediterranean cities, was absorbed by the Maltese, especially those who resided in Valletta. Those who were successful and financially well off, adopted the appearance of continentals,⁷¹ and embellished their homes in a similar fashion. The private collection of antiquities that belonged to Gian Francesco Abela (1582-1655), whose erudition and skill in languages led to his engagement by the Order of St John as Vice-chancellor from 1626 to 1655, heralded the start of art collecting amongst Maltese inhabitants (Fig. 14).⁷²

At another level, the establishment of a formal market arrangement for the sale of Hospitaller belongings by means of public auctions, encouraged the dispersal of finely crafted artefacts, including works of art, amongst the population, Hospitaller or otherwise. It is plausible to assume that paintings, sculptures and other visually rich artefacts may have started to filter into secular (non-Hospitaller) ownership by the first half of the seventeenth century, culminating in the late-eighteenth century when art dealers bought up entire collections for re-sale in Malta as well as overseas. The 1794 inventory of one Maltese private art collection that belonged to the architect Michele Cachia (1760-1839) reveals a collection of paintings ranging from Neapolitan landscapes, images of saints and Grand Harbour landscapes as well as portraits of his grandparents.⁷³ In 1792, a traveller to Malta remarked on the collection of 'curiosities in medals and stones' that belonged to one Sig. Barbaro.⁷⁴

On the 6th of June 1798, French troops led by Napoleon, invaded Malta. Within twelve days of the French general's landing in Malta, Grand Master Hompesch capitulated, relinquishing all the property of the Order of St John in Malta.⁷⁵ With Hompesch's departure from Malta for

⁷¹ By the early seventeenth century, Maltese townspeople wore mainly French costume, a feature that remained dominant amongst the Maltese upper classes until the arrival of the British in 1800; C. Cassar, *Popular Perceptions*, 450-51.

⁷² E.R. Leopardi, 'Gian Francesco Abela: His Life and Career' in *Gian Francesco Abela, Essays in his honour by members of the "Malta Historical Society" on the occasion of the Third Centenary of his death (1655-1955)*, Malta, 1961

⁷³ Notarial Archives of Malta: *Records of Notary Vittorio Decaro*, 1794, R219, Section '93-'94, f.12. The reference was kindly brought to my attention by Stephen C. Spiteri.

⁷⁴ Anon., *A Description of Malta, with a sketch of its history and that of its fortifications, translated from the Italian, with notes, by an Officer resident on the Island*, Malta, 1801, 17.

⁷⁵ The Government of the Maltese Islands was set up by an order issued by Bonaparte on 13 June 1798; Article 11 stated that 'All the property of the Order of Malta, of the Grand Master and of the different auberges of the knights

Trieste on 18 June 1798, the Hospitaller governance of the Maltese Islands came to an end. Those knights who remained loyal to the Order departed with their Grand Master. Their arrangements with Maltese notaries to make provision for the maintenance of their property implied their hope of returning. A few elderly knights were allowed to stay behind to face an impoverished life. Amongst them was Fra Bali Vittorio Vachon de Belmont (d.1807), who came to depend on an annual pension of £ Stg 36 in spite of his substantial property that yielded 37,304 *scudi* at the end of its *dispropriamento*.⁷⁶

1.4.1 *The fate of Hospitaller art in Malta during the French period, 1798 – 1800*

The Order was forced by Napoleon to leave Malta under hurried conditions, leaving all its art collections behind amongst the rest of its belongings and properties. With the departure of the Order and the beginning of French rule, sales continued to take place, though the collections of paintings that embellished the buildings of the Order probably remained *in situ*. The Order's buildings were adapted by the new French government and its officers, and probably did not suffer the same despoliation as the churches and their collections of ecclesiastical treasures, for which the new republican government had no use.

On the other hand, the Palace and other buildings of the Order of St John were certainly vulnerable to despoliation by authority. Reports from the French republican government tribunal meetings described the 'war booty' carried away from Malta by French galleys, listing flags, cannon and other unnamed treasures ('*d'autres objets precieux*'),⁷⁷ yet no archival record survives of those paintings or sculptures that were removed to Paris. Other sources mention 'many precious objects looted from the Palace armoury, a small bronze cannon of a high artistic standard, which had been donated by Louis XIV to the Order, various pictures of Malta, an antique silver model of the Order's first galley, a Chinese table which the Grand Masters used on very special occasions, and many other costly objects.'⁷⁸ In a letter to the Executive Directory in Paris, Napoleon described the booty he was sending to France, including 'many pictures, the most beautiful he could find, showing views of the Maltese Islands.'⁷⁹ The flags,

belong to the French Republic.' *Correspondance*, vol. IV No. 2643 quoted in Carmel Testa, *The French in Malta (1798-1800)*, Malta, 1997, 104.

⁷⁶ AOM 949 f.21; Belmont's *spoglio* included 43 framed prints (*stampe*), 3 miniatures (*quadretti*), a marble-inlay *Crucifix*, a pastel portrait of a philosopher, a portrait of Grand Master de Rohan and his own portrait.

⁷⁷ *Le Moniteur Universel*, No. 313 (Paris, 29 Messidor An VI [31 July 1798]) p.1254: '*Le General de division Baraguey-d'Hilliers revenait de Malthe en France; il apportait les drapeaux de Malthe, la grande coulevrine de soliman, et d'autres objets precieux*.' The report describes how the lightly-armed French frigate, the *Sensible*, was intercepted by the British frigate *Seahorse* and its treasures taken. An earlier issue of the journal listed the weaponry that was also removed from Malta: '*La Republique acquis à Malte deux vaisseaux de guerre, un frigate, quatre galeres, 1200 piece de canon, 1500 milliers de poudre, 40,000 fusils, et beaucoup d'autre objets dont le Directoire n'a pas encore reçu les details*', *Le Moniteur Universel*, No. 285 (Paris), 1140. Only one year earlier, the *Sensible* had been used to transport works of art and monuments seized in Venice by Napoleon. *Correspondance de Napoleon I publiée par ordre de l'Empereur Napoleon III*, Vol. 3, Paris, 1859, No. 2370 quoted by Testa, *The French in Malta*, 169 n.36.

⁷⁸ *Correspondance*, vol. 4, Nos 2680, 2685, 2690 and 2699, quoted in Testa, *The French in Malta*, 120.

⁷⁹ *Correspondance*, vol. 4, No. 2699, quoted in Testa, *The French in Malta*, 156.

cannon and views of Malta would appear to be of soldierly interest, and therefore worthy of note in any correspondence between Napoleon and the French Government. Napoleon also gave orders for all the silver and gold found inside the various properties of the Order – the Palaces, the *auberges* and the churches – to be melted down and transported as ingots to Egypt for sale.⁸⁰

It is also not unlikely that other treasures and works of art were carried away without any record, before French ships were blockaded inside the Grand Harbour. One instance that was recorded was the seventeenth-century bronze bust of Grand Master Cotoner that was displayed high up on one of the main gates in the Cottonera fortification line.⁸¹ The two-metre high bronze sculpture had been laboriously removed from its niche and placed in the French ship-of-the-line *Athenien* during the blockade of the Grand Harbour. With the French capitulation in 1800 and the subsequent incorporation of French warships in the English navy, the sculpture was returned to its original location.⁸² Perhaps more suggestive of the likelihood of the removal of works of art to France is the fact that Napoleon was accompanied by Dominique-Vivant Denon (1747-1825), his advisor on art and antiquities. The French art connoisseur was on the Egyptian campaign specifically for selecting those works of art and monuments that were to be taken from the invaded territories to France. Denon had been in Malta some years earlier, as part of a tour of the Classical Mediterranean world. He had published his memoirs, but did not include any observations on works of art in Malta.⁸³

Little else is known from the few months of French rule in Malta that concerned the works of art left in the buildings of the Order other than the churches. Religious buildings saw the total despoliation of treasures.⁸⁴ Within three months, the Maltese revolted against the French government and besieged the invaders inside the fortified city. The French held out for two years, and capitulated in September 1800.

1.4.2 The fate of Hospitaller art in Malta during the British period, 1800 – 1964

With the ousting of the French in 1800, Malta became a Protectorate of the British monarchy, with the result that British commanders and troops moved into the premises that had, barely two years earlier, been vacated by the Grand Master and knights of the Order of St John. The first decade of British rule saw a major upheaval in the newly-centralized administration of the

⁸⁰ The total value of gold and silver taken in Malta amounted to 489,659 *scudi*, or 1,185,170 francs, with the largest amount (to the value of 420,438 *scudi* or 1,019,051 francs) taken from St John's Conventual church. Testa, *The French in Malta*, 116.

⁸¹ Anon., *A Description of Malta*, 18 – 19.

⁸² Testa, *The French in Malta*, 824-5.

⁸³ M. De Non, *Travels in Sicily and Malta: Translated from the French of M. De Non, Gentleman in ordinary to the King of France, and Member of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture*, London, 1789.

⁸⁴ According to the inventory made by two French officers, the total value of loot taken from the churches amounted to 489,659 *scudi*, equivalent to 1,185,170 francs; Testa, *The French in Malta*, 115-119.

Order's art collections. Paintings from various *auberges* were taken away from the locations for which they had been commissioned and transferred to the Palace where the British Lieutenant-Generals and later Governors resided (Fig. 15). High level administrators allowed themselves to pick and choose works to embellish their own residences.⁸⁵

Paintings were also moved from one building to another to embellish afresh the residences that had once belonged to the Order, and which came to house the high-ranking officers of the British administration. Other artifacts were given away as gifts, or taken away as personal possessions; this was mostly not documented. One newspaper account described the removal of several paintings from the Palace by Thomas Maitland, Governor from 1813-1824 to embellish his palace in Corfú. The paintings were not documented, nor were they ever returned.⁸⁶ Other instances of paintings being sent overseas to unknown destinations have started to surface.⁸⁷ Furthermore, auctions were held inside the auberges, most notably the *auberge* of the Langue of Provence, with notices of sales of paintings by Old Masters, such as '*Una scelta e pregevole collezione di quadri Antichi e Moderni di Morland, Tintoretto, Rubens, Titian, Raffaello, Albano, Rycart, Cuyp, Giulio Romano, Domenichino, Mayer, Lebrun, Sir Peter Lely, Palma Vecchio, Carlo Dolce* [and others]'.⁸⁸ An earlier sale of 'A Valuable Collection of Cabinet and Gallery Oil Paintings' was also held in the same premises.⁸⁹ The Palace armoury was also depleted, with several pieces being sent to the Tower of London where they are still displayed. Also removed from the Palace, and today displayed in St John's Museum in Clerkenwell, is the very richly carved personal *cassone* of Grand Master La Cassière (1572-1581) displaying the owner's coat-of-arms. This rare museum piece had graced the Grand Masters' bedroom until the nineteenth century. The Grand Master's *cassone* ended in private hands and eventually in the London museum.⁹⁰

The new colonial governance of Malta at the start of the nineteenth century thus heralded a complete transformation of the art collection that had once epitomized the worldly splendour of

⁸⁵ During his post in Malta as military secretary, Colonel Seymour-Bathurst gathered together portraits of the Grand Masters in the house that he then occupied, Casa Correa in Old Bakery Street, where he subsequently left them; Adolphus Slade, *Turkey, Greece and Malta*, London, 1837, 91; Donald Sultana, *The Journey of Sir Walter Scott to Malta*, Gloucester, 1986, 82. These portraits were believed to be by Spanish and Neapolitan masters such as Ribera and Caravaggio; Donald Sultana, *Benjamin Disraeli in Spain, Malta and Albania*, London, 1976, 40.

⁸⁶ *The Malta Times*, June 18, 1863.

⁸⁷ Theresa Vella, *Charles Frederick de Brocktorff: Watercolours of Malta at the National Library, Valletta Vol II*, Malta, 2008, 149-50. One painting showing the interior of the Palace includes the painting *Boethius consoled by Philosophy* by Mattia Preti (1613-1699) that was removed from Malta during the nineteenth century.

⁸⁸ Advert placed in the Maltese newspaper by Sig. Dalzel in *Il Portafoglio Maltese*, 9 September 1839, 598. The sale was accompanied by a catalogue and took place in the Grand Salon of the Auberge on Monday 16 September, 1839. The advert was kindly brought to my attention by Ms Anna Borg Cardona.

⁸⁹ 'A Valuable Collection of Cabinet and Gallery Oil Paintings etc etc etc to be sold by public auction by Mr. Dalzel at his rooms in the Auberge de Provence on Saturday 6th of April 1839 at 2 o'clock p.m. precisely: as will be described in catalogues of be had at the place of sale where the paintings may be seen any day previous. Conditions as usual', *Il Portafoglio Maltese*, 30 March 1839, 397. The advert was kindly brought to my attention by Ms Anna Borg Cardona.

⁹⁰ Richard Williams, *St John's Gate Picture Book*, London, 1947 quoted in Giovanni Bonello, 'The Hidden History of the Palace Pillage', 3-part essay, *The Sunday Times [of Malta]* 25 July, 1 August and 8 August, 2010.

Hospitaller knights. Works of art were dispersed into private ownership by legal means as well as by unsolicited appropriation. Throughout the nineteenth century, several works of art left Malta while others moved into the private collections of Maltese families. A first attempt to regulate the state-owned works of art was made in 1823 with the compilation of an inventory of paintings found inside the Palace, which since 1800 had been the residence of the British monarch's representative in Malta. The inventory was compiled by the Maltese artist and teacher Giorgio Pullicino, and later formed the basis of a second inventory which was compiled in 1866.⁹¹ However, both lists are incomplete, as shown by paintings executed in the 1820s that depict in great detail some halls of the Palace and which show paintings that are not listed. In 1895, a far more comprehensive inventory was compiled and published by Blanche Lintorn-Simmons who included works of art found in San Anton Palace and Verdala Palace.⁹² A comparative analysis of all three lists together with the pre-1800 works of art found in the national art collection today, presents a challenge to future researchers.

1.4.3 Hospitaller art in the National Museum of Malta, 1903

The turn of the twentieth century saw the setting up of the National Museum of Malta. A Fine Arts section was established in 1923 with the appointment as curator of the art historian and conservator, Vincenzo Bonello. The initiative saw the gradual growth of the collection with works of art donated by Maltese philanthropists and others. Meanwhile Bonello started to transfer to the museum, major works of art that were kept in state offices, as well as to purchase other works with a possible Maltese provenance from sales in Rome and elsewhere. The new gathering of works of art in the National Museum was part of the curator's vision in establishing a national collection worthy of the name, of a standard matching other art galleries in Europe. His work was cut short due to the hostilities that escalated before World War II. However, Bonello's research and efforts in conservation set the pattern for his successors.

This thesis is envisaged to contribute to a better understanding of the national art collection by leading to a greater knowledge about its beginnings and its growth. It is also envisaged to provide a founding platform from which to study the transformation of the Order's art collection into disparate and numerous private collections and its subsequent re-aggregation through the narrative of a national museum. Such an outcome is comparable to the lifespan of other European collections that were re-assembled in the course of the setting up of major state museums from Spain to St Petersburg, and from Stockholm to Malta.⁹³

⁹¹ *Rapporto Preliminare: Comitato Speciale nominato ad oggetto di render in considerazione lo stato della Pittura del Tetto della Chiesa di San Giovanni, e lo stato del Palazzo Magistrale ed i mobili in esso esistenti; Stampato per Ordine del Consiglio di Governo di Malta, Malta, 1866.*

⁹² Lintorn-Simmons, *Description of the Governor's Palaces.*

⁹³ The subject of the value-transformation of art collections has been the subject of studies in Museology, but still awaits focused Art Historical attention. One recent dissertation that helped to inform this aspect of my thesis was that by Britta Tøndborg, *From Kunstkammer to art museum: Exhibiting and cataloging art in the Royal*

1.5 Historiography of Hospitaller art patronage and collecting

Having introduced the principal and secondary protagonists of the thesis, that is, the Hospitaller Order of St John, the successive periods of French and British rule, and the gathering of Hospitaller works of art in the National Museum, a brief survey of the historiography of early modern Hospitaller art is necessary to situate the contribution to be made by this thesis to studies on Hospitaller art collections. In 1989, one art historian working in the archive of the Museum of St John in London wrote that 'Works of art commissioned by the Order [of St John] collectively and individually are scattered in museums and private collections throughout Malta and Europe: the history of the Order's patronage of the arts has still to be written.'⁹⁴ Several hundred paintings that once belonged to the Hospitaller Order of St John, from the time when it ruled Malta between 1530 and 1798, are now kept in the National Museum of Fine Arts of Malta (Fig. 16). The finest paintings from the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which are on display in the museum today, used to form part of the art collections of Hospitaller knights, and of the magistral collection in the Palace of the Grand Master in Valletta (Fig. 17).

Until the first years of the twentieth century, the historiography of art in Malta consisted of chronological listings and brief descriptions of key artists active on the Island, starting from the late sixteenth century onwards. Interest in Maltese art history had been growing noticeably in the course of the nineteenth century till the turn of the twentieth that heralded the setting up of the National Museum in the nation's revived quest for independence. Although much research has been published on artists and the works of art executed in Malta in the time of the Order,⁹⁵ scholars have only recently started to discuss the role of Hospitaller knights as art patrons, with papers such as 'The Identity of Caravaggio's Knight of Malta' (1997) by John Gash,⁹⁶ and 'In praise of Caravaggio's 'Sleeping Cupid': New documents for Francesco dell'Antella' (1997) by David M. Stone,⁹⁷ while John T. Spike has published the *catalogue raisonnée* (1999) of the artist-knight Fra Mattia Preti, as well as his correspondence (1998) with extensive notes on the artist's patrons and collectors.⁹⁸ The public display of paintings and sculptures by Italian,

Collections in Copenhagen in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (unpublished doctoral thesis, The Courtauld Institute of Art, 2004).

⁹⁴ Julia Toffolo, 'A Maltese Auction of 1779: the Artefact Collection of Fra Giuseppe Raiberti; an unpublished manuscript in the Museum of the Order of St John', *Furniture History*, Journal of the Furniture History Society, 25, 1989, 109-119.

⁹⁵ Scholarship on paintings and sculptures that once belonged to the Order, or that are located within the buildings in Malta that once belonged to the Order, has surfaced regularly as articles published in mainstream English language journals such as *The Burlington Magazine* and *The Art Bulletin*, and in Italian language journals such as *Paragone* and *Storia dell'Arte*, and in exhibition catalogues worldwide.

⁹⁶ John Gash, 'The Identity of Caravaggio's Knight of Malta', *The Burlington Magazine*, 139: 1128, London, 1997, 156-160.

⁹⁷ David M. Stone, 'In praise of Caravaggio's *Sleeping Cupid*: New documents for Francesco dell'Antella', *Melita Historica*, Journal of the Malta Historical Society, 12: 2, Malta, 1997, 165-177.

⁹⁸ John T. Spike, *Mattia Preti: The Collected Documents*, Taverna, 1998, and *Mattia Preti: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings*, Taverna, 1999.

French and Flemish artists enabled the development of a better-informed audience on Malta's art history, especially with regards to the period of the Order of St John.

Throughout the twentieth century research has been aimed mainly at a canonical history of art in Malta that focuses on artists and their students and is led by the History of Art Department, first established at the University of Malta in 1989. Latterly, on the museum exhibition front, a series of major art shows, sourced mainly from private collections in Malta, has led to an increased awareness of the role of the collector in the history of art.⁹⁹

In 1955, Hannibal Scicluna published the first major overview of the artistic patronage of the Order focused exclusively on St John's Conventual Church.¹⁰⁰ The history of its sculptural works was recently updated by Keith Sciberras, in '*Roman Baroque Sculpture for the Knights of Malta*',¹⁰¹ who also established the role undertaken by ambassadors in art commissions, as well as the centrality of Rome to the cultural background of the Order of St John. Giovanni Bonello has also recently presented the first overview of Hospitaller knights in the role of secular patrons of the arts in an essay focusing on the public munificence of Grand Masters.¹⁰² This form of art patronage had led to the commissioning of tapestries, funerary monuments, reliquaries and monstrances, choral books, vestments, and altarpieces as well as major building projects such as aqueducts, fortifications, churches, a theatre and a library, and patronage of the performing arts. '*Baroque Painting in Malta*' (2009),¹⁰³ also by Keith Sciberras, provides the most comprehensive canon, to date, of artists who practised in Malta between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries.

The brief historiographical appraisal outlined above, is intended to provide a context to the purpose of the research that will unfold in the following chapters. Although a brief history of the fate of Hospitaller paintings after the departure of the Order in 1798 has been given, this has been done for the purpose of providing a full historical context. This brief history is also intended to demonstrate the need for a new set of research parameters and methodologies in order to trace the modern history of Hospitaller paintings, differently from the research methodology devised for the present thesis.

⁹⁹ The main exhibitions were those linked to the tercentenary of the death of Mattia Preti in 1999, and to the quatercentenary of the arrival of Caravaggio in Malta in 2007. In 2008, an exhibition held at Les Invalides, Paris, of 'Masterpieces from the Armoury of the Malta', highlighted the Order's extensive patronage of decorative art in Malta.

¹⁰⁰ Hannibal Scicluna, *The Church of St John in Valletta*, Rome, 1955.

¹⁰¹ Keith Sciberras, *Roman Baroque Sculpture for the Knights of St John*, Malta, 2004.

¹⁰² Giovanni Bonello, 'Patronage by the Knights of Malta', in *Entre Le Glaive et La Croix: Chefs d'Oeuvres de L'Armurerie de Malta – Between the Battlesword and the Cross: Masterpieces from the Armoury of Malta*, ed. by V.A. Cremona and O. Renaudau, Paris/Malta, 2008.

¹⁰³ Keith Sciberras, *Baroque Painting in Malta*, Malta, 2009.

The following chapters will focus on the earlier part, that is, those years of the Order's history from the turn of the sixteenth century to the end of the eighteenth century. This study aims to contribute to the literature on collections, by substantiating the role of the Hospitaller knight as art patron, and by formulating an understanding of Hospitaller art collections based on findings that are drawn from primary and secondary sources, as well as through the observation of extant works of art from the Maltese period of the Order. The following chapters examine the formation of the Hospitaller art collections under the patronage of a religious and military Order, whose noble knights took vows of chastity, obedience, and poverty. In the course of their dispersal, later secular collections have been re-configured to include Hospitaller paintings, thereby integrating elements of re-imagined geographies within the shifting narratives of the new collectors' artistic choices. In elucidating the nature and extent of Hospitaller art collections, this research aims to contribute to the history of art collecting as well as to the genealogy of museums, both of which are growth fields in art historical studies.

The thesis also aims to contribute to the growing field of research into choices made by men in collecting works of art, through the demarcated kind of membership of the Hospitaller Order of St John as defined by the rules of the Order. An exploration of the contemporary cultural influences that were specific to Hospitaller knights, such as the guide on knightly behaviour by Fra Sabba da Castiglione, *'Ricordi ovvero Ammaestramenti ...'* (1546) sheds light on the way works of art were seen in their own day, and the significance that an art collection could hold for the Hospitaller knight collector.

The chapters that follow present a discussion on the various aspects and conclusions that may be drawn from a cross-examination of Hospitaller art inventories. The various regional influences and contemporary literary sources that shaped the start of Hospitaller collecting practices are mapped out in Chapter II. The geographic roots of early modern art collecting practices are shown to be in fifteenth-century Burgundian court culture, and in Renaissance humanism mediated by the ducal and papal courts in Italy. Chapter III demonstrates how these diverse cultural sources coalesced into the distinctly 'Hospitaller' culture that developed in early modern Malta, by identifying the nature and extent of the Order's institutional art patronage that was first demonstrated during its last decades in Rhodes. Chapter IV focuses on the magistral art collection as another influence in the shaping of individual Hospitaller collections. This chapter presents a compilation of the Order's art collection, drawn from documentary sources, including those works of art that were viewed by Hospitaller knights in other buildings of the Order. Chapters V and VI are dedicated to interpreting the archival documentation pertaining to Hospitaller inventories. They define the mechanisms for the collection and dispersal of works of art that were permitted within the parameters of the Order's statutory regulations. These chapters also unpack and interpret the formats and texts that were frequently used in their

compilation. Chapter VII is a thematic study of the art collections that belonged to individual Hospitaller knights, that focus on how the collections served as symbolic markers of identity and values, firstly within the religious scope of devotional art and secondly within the values-laden choices of secular genres. A synthesis of the findings will be presented in Chapter VIII, outlining the main conclusions on the early modern cultural formation of Hospitaller knights as mediated through art collecting, thereby presenting the study's principal contribution to scholarship on the history of art collecting.

II: ART COLLECTING IN RENAISSANCE AND EARLY MODERN EUROPE

In providing a broad survey of models of art patronage in European royal and ducal courts and cities between the mid-fifteenth and early seventeenth centuries, one can start with a brief description of the scholarship on the subject that followed Francis Haskell's seminal work. A longer historical view then follows with a focus on classical texts and antiquity and the way in which they provided the intellectual and theoretical basis to the beginnings of magnificence and good governance, from which were engendered the practices of art patronage and collecting by monarchs, dukes and popes. Regional characteristics of the assembling of works of art into collections, and their use as a powerful means of self-fashioning and identity, are also highlighted.

This chapter also demonstrates how young novices of the Order brought to fruition the lessons in art collecting and patronage, learnt in their youth from direct observation in various royal and ducal courts, lessons that were adapted throughout the course of their life as Hospitaller knights, both in Malta, as well as later on with their representative role in the Order's Europe-wide commanderies. This chapter concludes with the lessons for Hospitaller knights given in the widely published *Ricordi ovvero Ammaestramenti* (1549, 1560) by Fra Sabba da Castiglione, focusing on those teachings that related to art and collecting. It will demonstrate how *Ricordi* ... provided the appropriate theoretical foundations - by adapting Renaissance concepts of *liberalità* and splendour in relation to the Hospitaller vows of poverty, chastity and obedience - that underpinned the rationale of art collecting in the life of a knight.

2.1 Literature

In Chapter I, we looked at the literature on the history of art collecting and on new modes of enquiry. Closer to the historical period of interest and the geographical breadth of the respective cultural influences under consideration, is Jonathan Brown's '*Kings and Connoisseurs*',¹ which chronicles the growth of the major European princely collections of the seventeenth century. Brown focused new attention on 'the ambitions of kings, the emulation of royal collecting by courtiers, scenes of fierce competition over ownership of the most famous old master paintings, the duplicity of art dealers and the vanity of connoisseurs.'² Other historians such as Peter Burke, Mary Hollingsworth, Luke Syson and Dora Thornton have contributed to the field with

¹ Jonathan Brown, *Kings and Connoisseurs: Collecting Art in seventeenth century Europe*, New Haven, 1995.

² Stephen Gleissner: Review, '*Kings and Connoisseurs*' by Jonathan Brown, *Journal of the History of Collections* 9: 1, 1997, 174.

works on the social context of art collecting, based on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century primary material that represents the mentality of the age, and that links art collecting to humanist principles.³ More recently, Marina Belozerskaya has questioned the primacy of the Italian Renaissance as the instigator of artistic patronage, drawing scholarly attention to the magnificence and splendour of ducal rule in fifteenth-century Burgundy.⁴ The publication of original Italian sources and manuscripts on the Italian history of collecting by Cristina de Benedictis has drawn attention to the variety of sources on collecting, from poetry and letters to memorials and publications, by which to trace the development of private collections into museums.⁵ In an area of research closely related to Hospitaller history, Silvia Evangelisti has linked material wealth to religious life. She studied the meaning of material culture amongst the cloistered nuns of San Giovanni dei Cavalieri in Florence, a convent with links to the Order of St John, and whose community was similarly made up of women from noble families.⁶

The beginnings of art collecting can be traced to antiquity, from the writings of Aristotle, the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where the concept of magnificence is outlined in terms of honourable behaviour appropriate to leaders and men of means and the prestige that comes with its expression:

‘Magnificence is an attribute of expenditures of the kind which we call honourable, that is those connected with the gods – votive offerings, buildings, and sacrifices – and similarly with any form of religious worship, and all those that are proper objects of public-spirited ambition, as when people think they ought to equip a chorus or a trireme, or entertain the city, in a brilliant way. But in all cases ... we have regard to the agent as well and ask who he is and what means he has; for the expenditure should be worthy of his means, and suit not only the result but also the producer. Hence a poor man cannot be magnificent, since he has not the means with which to spend large sums fittingly ... But great expenditure is becoming to those who have suitable means to start with, acquired by their own efforts or from ancestors or connections, and to people of high birth and reputation, and so on; for all these things bring them greatness and prestige ... A magnificent man will also furnish his house suitably to his wealth ... and will spend by preference on those works that are lasting.’⁷

³ Mary Hollingsworth, *Patronage in sixteenth century Italy* (1996), Peter Burke, *The fortunes of the courtier: the European reception of Castiglione's 'Cortegiano'* (1995), as well as Luke Syson and Dora Thornton, *Objects of Virtue: Art in Renaissance Italy* (2001).

⁴ Marina Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance: Burgundian Arts across Europe*, Cambridge, 2002.

⁵ Cristina de Benedictis, *Per la storia del Collezionismo Italiano: fonti e documenti con 129 tavole fuori testo*, Milan, 2010, 79-86.

⁶ The convent also served as a burial site for Hospitaller knights. Silvia Evangelisti, ‘Monastic Poverty and Material Culture in Early Modern Convents’, *The Historical Journal*, 47: 1, March 2004, 9.

⁷ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (335BC) 1122.

Later classical philosophers such as Cicero and Seneca, formulated the totemic value of artistically crafted artefacts, by applying the concepts of magnificence, splendour and liberality,⁸ as contextual values for the accumulation of treasures, the patronage of art and the appropriateness of art as gift.⁹ Drawing on the teachings of Plato as given in *The Republic*,¹⁰ Cicero discussed the four Cardinal Virtues of Justice, Fortitude, Temperance and Prudence.¹¹ In the thirteenth century, theologians revived Aristotelian philosophy in the light of Christian morality and virtue. In his *Summa Theologica* Thomas Aquinas also elaborated upon the virtues.¹² In the time of the Renaissance, these philosophical writings and others were sought by princes as sources of knowledge on effective governance. They provided the basis for attaining supremacy and glory, through magnificent deeds that were essential elements for successful governance and for broadcasting political authority to rival rulers of other domains. Antiquity also provided archetypal models in the historical figures of Alexander and Julius Caesar, and the legendary figures of Hercules and Jason. Their stories were harnessed to political advantage by Burgundian dukes to evoke their own virtues and greatness in engaging artisans and artists for the creation of tapestries, staged performances and *tableaux vivants* during banquets and tournaments, as well as establishing the Order of the Golden Fleece. The writings of Guillaume Fillastre in *Toison d'Or* also linked the discussion of magnificence to contemporary political theory.¹³

During the Renaissance, ancient rules of conduct were revived by Italian humanist philosophers such as Leonardo Bruni whose scholarship, in *De Studiis et Litteris*, explored the moral virtues discussed by classical writers as well as their speculations on nature and the causes and origins of things.¹⁴ This study of classical texts was complemented by excavations and discoveries of ancient sculpture and the scrutiny of Roman architecture, as spearheaded by Brunelleschi in adapting lessons from the antique to modern architecture.¹⁵ Antique triumphal arches were seen to be monuments to the impressive power of classical rulers, while the writings of Vitruvius were the foundation for rules of art and architecture, as codified by L.B. Alberti in *De Pictura*, and *De Re Aedificatoria*.¹⁶ The expressions of magnificence that Tuscan and Paduan dukes

⁸ Cicero (63BC) and Seneca, *De Beneficiis* (63AD) as quoted in Guido Guerzoni, 'Liberalitas, Magnificentia, Splendor: The Classic Origins of Italian Renaissance Lifestyles', *History of Political Economy* 31, N. Carolina, 1999, 333-378, and in Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, 47-75.

⁹ Marcel Mauss, [*Essai sur le don*. English] *The gift: the form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*, London, 1990.

¹⁰ Plato, *The Republic*, 4:427ff.

¹¹ Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes*, I, xi, 18; *De finibus malorum et bonorum*, V, xxiii, 67; cf. *De officiis*, I, ii, 5.

¹² St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Parts I-II, Question lxi, aa. 2 and 4

¹³ Guillaume Fillastre, *Le premier (-second) volume de la Toison d'or composé par Guillaume Evesque de Tournay*, 2 vols, Paris, 1516; Troye, 1530.

¹⁴ Leonardo Bruni, *Leonardi aretini poete de studiis litteris ad illustrem domina baptistam de malatestis*, Padua, 1483.

¹⁵ One example of Brunelleschi's adaptation of Classical principles of architecture to contemporary (Renaissance) architecture is the Basilica of Santa Maria del Santo Spirito, Florence. The building of the church continued after his death in 1446.

¹⁶ Leon Battista Alberti, *De pictura praestantissima arte libri tres ...*, Basilea, 1540; Leon Battista Alberti, *De re aedificatoria*, Florence, 1485.

aspired to were of a more intellectual nature, designed less to impress and awe, than to communicate their virtues through harmony of proportions and erudition in narrative elements as well as in conceptual ones. The Medici rulers of Florence, with their origins as merchant bankers engendered their own expressions of magnificence, living as quasi-monarchs amongst an entourage of philosophers and artists who gave literary and visual form to their nascent political authority.

2.2 The emergence of art collecting practices in Europe

A vital element in the structuring of a magnificent collection of works of art was its visibility. Splendour was meant to impress and dazzle, leading to the experience of viewing an art collection being given in measured form through public ceremony and ritual, as well as the more privileged status of private viewing. The record of that experience would be impressed in the minds of the viewers, first-hand witnesses who included ambassadors and diplomatic functionaries, dignitaries and courtiers. The transmission of knowledge of royal art collections and their contents happened through formal diplomatic networks, while official reports giving details of sumptuous ceremonies would occasionally be disseminated. Less formal networks of communication were afforded by those young men and women from foreign courts, sent to receive their training in courtly practices while working in royal service.

Ambassadorial exchanges in correspondence with their sovereign were another informal, yet vital channel for the expression of rivalry between monarchs, princes and dukes, and anyone else who had the wealth, sophistication and education to compete in that arena.¹⁷ A significant yet subtle role for ambassadors occurred within social or informal settings. Art collections were given international visibility in accounts given by ambassadors, especially in the context of accounts on ceremonial behaviour and the staging of diplomatic receptions.¹⁸

As markers of public-standing authority, works of art had to be seen to be also appropriate to the status of the collector, echoing the above-quoted Aristotelian precept that expenditure had to be worthy of a man's means. The acquisition of works of art by courtiers and diplomats was a complex matter that depended on courtly favour and gift-giving with all the political

¹⁷ The search for works of art was occasionally used as a pretext for a diplomatic mission, as with the case of Rubens. Deborah Marrow, 'Marie de Medici and the decoration of the Luxembourg Palace', *The Burlington Magazine*, 121:921, December 1979, 786.

¹⁸ Monique Chatenet, 'The King's Space: The Etiquette of Interviews at the French Court in the Sixteenth Century', in *The Politics of Space: European Courts ca. 1500-1750* ed. by M. Fantoni, G. Gorse and M. Smuts, Rome, 2009, 199-200.

implications that this carried.¹⁹ This is demonstrated by the apparent rectitude shown by courtiers during reign of Philip II of Spain, by refraining from possibly compromising displays of venality, in accepting or receiving gifts, as the King's permission would be needed. This measure was plausibly aimed at eliminating corruption through bribery, or at least the perception of it, yet the barring of works of art as official gifts was occasion for frustration in diplomatic efforts, as shown in correspondence from the Tuscan ambassador in Madrid, Francesco Guiccardini, to Ferdinando I, in 1594.²⁰ Royal collections depended on the advice of a chosen courtier who could occasionally own a collection that included greater masterpieces than that of his monarch's. Charles I had the earls of Arundel and Buckingham, Louis XIII had Cardinal Richelieu, Philip VI had the Duke of Lerma. The acquisition of paintings from the studios of famed artists had to be conducted across great distances, often on the advice of an art dealer who could be playing off one collector against another to fetch the highest price possible.

Market conditions also affected the availability of works of art. Isabelle of Castille's governance at the turn of the sixteenth century was directly responsible for the flourishing of the international art market in Spain through free fairs and markets, the employment of foreign artists at her court, and improved trade relations with Northern Europe.²¹ The availability of works of art through the art markets and fairs of Europe also depended on the not infrequent state of war. Peace treaties played a part in opening up art markets that were previously inaccessible, while artists could be enticed to leave their homeland to work in foreign courts. This was the case after 1604 when England and Spain made peace, leading to English court figures such as Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, and shortly after, Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel breaking away from the Dutch monopoly of art markets by learning the ways of continental art collecting, and seeking out Italian sixteenth- and seventeenth-century paintings.²² Within a short time, Italian artists were enticed to the royal court of Charles I: Orazio Gentileschi and his daughter Artemisia were drawn to London in 1626 and 1638 respectively, while in 1629 Peter Paul Rubens executed some paintings for the Catholic king in the course of his diplomatic missions on behalf of the Spanish Hapsburg monarch.

A more focused survey of art patronage in its regional forms follows, taking a geo-historical route that starts in the fifteenth century in the splendour that was displayed, to astonishing lengths in the court of the Dukes of Burgundy, Philip the Good (1419-1467) and his successor

¹⁹ At the king's palace at Fontainebleau, paintings of Pandora reminded courtiers that a gift box contained mixed blessings, while pictures of the Judgment of Paris warned them that the gift of a golden apple could lead to a Trojan war; Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, Wisconsin, 2000, 67.

²⁰ Edward L. Goldberg, 'Artistic Relations between the Medici and the Spanish Courts, 1587-1621: Part I', *The Burlington Magazine*, 138: 1115, February 1996, 106-7.

²¹ Mari-Tere Alvarez, 'Artistic Enterprise and Spanish Patronage: The Art Market during the Reign of Isabel of Castille, 1474-1504', in *Art Markets in Europe, 1400-1800*, ed. by M. North and D. Ormrod, Aldershot, 1998, 49.

²² Lawrence Stone, 'The Market for Italian Art', *Past and Present*, November 1959, 92-94.

Charles the Bold (1467-1477). Further south, in France, the Burgundian court was the model for the court of Francois I Valois (1494-1547) who assembled a magnificent art collection of paintings by Netherlandish and Italian masters. Within the same period, at the turn of the sixteenth century, Italian ducal art patrons too aspired to harness the visual arts, in their efforts to achieve political supremacy on the Burgundian model mediated through collections of paintings and sculptures that were steeped in the lessons learnt from antiquity. In the sixteenth century art collecting was being taken to a new order of magnitude in the form of the royal Spanish collection. This section is rounded off with the model established by the collections that were assembled in Rome by popes and prelates, which to a large extent mirrored the political and institutional considerations which also impinged on the art collecting practices of Hospitaller knights of St John.

2.2.1 *The Burgundian court*

The fifteenth-century Burgundian Court was emulated by the royal courts of England, Spain and France and by the Italian courts of Florence, Urbino, Naples and Milan, in the material splendour of the palaces and in the manner in which Renaissance classicism found expression in elaborate festivities and court ceremony for the court's political ends.²³ In the patronage of luxury arts, particularly historiated and ornamental tapestries, illuminated manuscripts, gold plate, jewellery, armour, and costumes, the Burgundian court held a greater preference for artefacts that served a practical purpose or function (Fig. 18). Such luxury artefacts held a purpose as political declarations or expressions of devotion, family honour, or civic pride yet that also reflected splendour, material value and fine craftsmanship. Intellectual enterprise was equally valued, shown through regular acquisitions of classical and humanist works in both Latin and French, and through the Dukes' efforts at ameliorating their public speaking with classical allusions.²⁴ Their patronage of Netherlandish art has also been shown to have served as a form of cultural imperialism. One eloquent instance of such an agency of artistic patronage is shown with respect to the tapestry series based on the theme of the history of Alexander III.²⁵ In 1459, when Philip the Good purchased a new tapestry set on the life of the Macedonian hero, woven in gold, silver, silk and fine wool by the Grenier manufactory in Tournai, this act of patronage whetted the appetite of other foreign rulers who aspired to emulate the magnificent court of the Burgundian Duke. Francesco Sforza and Edward IV both acquired copies of the series from the Tournai manufactory in 1459 and 1467-8 respectively. The tapestry series was also rolled out on the façade of the palace of Philip the Good in 1461, deliberately upstaging the entry into Paris of King Louis XI. In 1469, Philip the Good's successor, Charles the Bold

²³ Dagmar Eichberger, Review: *Rethinking the Renaissance* by Marina Belozerskaya, *The Burlington Magazine* (June 2003) 453-4. Material on the Burgundian court is mainly indebted to Belozerskaya's book, unless indicated otherwise.

²⁴ Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, 67-75.

²⁵ G. Doutrepoint, *La littérature française à la cour des ducs de Bourgogne*, Paris, 1909, 186, and A. Pinchart, *Tapisseries flammandes*, Paris, 1878, 30, both quoted in Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, 71-72.

deployed the programmatic ensemble alongside a tapestry illustrating the history of Hannibal. This was done during his meeting with the leaders of Ghent following their rebellion against the duke, thereby articulating through visual imagery his threat to crush future uprisings. In 1473, the duke also exhibited the set during his meeting with the emperor Friedrich III at Trier, where he argued his case for a royal crown.

The Burgundian court also excelled in its patronage of artists, as exemplified by Philip the Good, patron of Jan van Eyck (d.1441) and Charles the Bold, patron of Rogier van der Weyden (1400-1464). The two artists attained high social distinction thanks to the political offices that they held - Jan served as a courtier and diplomat to Philip the Good, while Rogier was the official city painter of Brussels who also executed projects for the duke and his entourage. Jan van Eyck travelled on several political missions for Philip the Good, demonstrating the usefulness of an artist's versatility and flexibility as key factors in being chosen for diplomatic missions.²⁶ Van Eyck's association with the Burgundian court augmented the esteem with which the artist was held, making his paintings worthy of being royal gifts. When Van Eyck's St George was presented to King Alfonso V of Aragon, its value was qualified with the phrase 'Master John the great painter of the illustrious duke of Burgundy'.²⁷ Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden were exceptions, like Giotto and later Mantegna, in the relatively low esteem with which artists were held, and thus spearheaded the prestige which art came to obtain through artists such as Mantegna, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo and several others, while theorists like Giorgio Vasari and Karel van Mander through their writings raised the status of painting to that of an art founded in true learning.²⁸

Burgundian courtly values and conventions with respect to art patronage and collecting, were subsequently effectively transmitted throughout Europe. When Alfonso of Aragon moved his court to Naples, after his conquest of that city in 1442, he imported Netherlandish tapestries and paintings, while adopting local expressions of power such as the classical revival in monumental architecture and sculpture, in order to assert his pre-eminence amongst Italian princes.²⁹ In Italy meanwhile, Italian princes sought the works of Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden, while Italian writers heaped praise on their works, admiring them not only for their naturalism, but also for their social distinction.³⁰ Venetian and Tuscan artists emulated their style, aware of the commercial benefits of Netherlandish-style creations. This is particularly evident in finely detailed portraiture, such as the double portrait of Federigo da Montefeltro and his wife Battista

²⁶ Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, 192-93.

²⁷ Roberto Weiss, 'Jan Van Eyck and the Italians', *Italian Studies*, 11, 1956, 11-12.

²⁸ Giorgio Vasari, *Vite de' piu' eccellenti pittori scultori e architetti*, 12 vols, Milan, 1807-1811; Karel van Mander, *Het Schilder-boeck*, Haarlem, 1604.

²⁹ Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, 179-193.

³⁰ Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, 186.

Sforza (Fig. 19),³¹ painted by Piero della Francesca, who executed the portrait in the manner of Netherlandish realism (Fig. 20), showing the effect of sumptuous fabrics and gleaming jewels, set against a distant landscape.³² Flemish tapestries were eagerly acquired by the Sforza in Milan, who also recruited Netherlandish weavers to set up local production, as did the Este, the Gonzaga, the Montefeltro and the Medici.³³ In England, Edward IV engaged Olivier de la Marche, Charles the Bold's Master of Ceremonies, to compose for him a detailed description of the organization of the Burgundian household (*L'État de la maison du duc Charles de Bourgogne*, 1473-4), while Henry VII, like Edward IV before him, harnessed Burgundian forms of communication, from the organization of the royal household to the embellishment of the royal buildings, from modes of entertainment to literary patronage at his own court, thus enhancing his standing both nationally and internationally.³⁴ Tatiana String has demonstrated how his successor, Henry VIII, refined the role of the visual arts to communicate the stability and strength of his monarchy by employing 'four levels of intentionality', that is, by communicating magnificence, topicality (through the timeliness of communicating royal ideology), persuasiveness (aimed at small, distinct groups) and propaganda (aimed at the wider masses). Such measures found correspondences with the royal self-fashioning of Francis I of France.³⁵

2.2.2 *The Valois court in France*

Francis I (1494-1547) was the first European monarch to enrich the royal palaces with a magnificent art collection with paintings that were sourced from Italian masters as well as from Netherlandish masters.³⁶ As a contemporary of Henry VIII of England and Charles V of Spain, Francis I understood the communicative force of the visual arts and harnessed them to build up a public persona of splendour and magnificence. He was the first foreign monarch to succeed in attracting major Italian artists such as Andrea del Sarto and Leonardo da Vinci to his court; he also engaged artists such as Benvenuto Cellini, Giulio Romano, Rosso Fiorentino and Primaticcio to decorate his palaces. He employed agents in Italy to source works of art by contemporary masters such as Michelangelo, Titian and Raphael. At Fontainebleau, a long gallery was constructed next to the lodgings of Francis I (Fig. 21), to display his art collection in close proximity to his private chambers.³⁷ The accumulation of artistic treasures was thus also

³¹ Piero della Francesca, *Portraits of Federico da Montefeltro and His Wife Battista Sforza* (1465-66), tempera on panel, 47 x 33 cm (each), Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

³² Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, 263-9; Belozerskaya quotes other instances of Italian replicas of devotional paintings by Hans Memling, as well as Italian devotional paintings with a distinctly Dutch townscape in the background, while even Raphael's *Madonna of the Goldfinch* is assessed for its origins in Memling's *Sr Veronica*.

³³ Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, 197.

³⁴ Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, 146-160.

³⁵ Tatiana String, *Art and Communication in the Reign of Henry VIII*, Aldershot, 2008, 13-44.

³⁶ Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Sixteenth-century Italy*, 306-308.

³⁷ Chatenet, 'The King's Space', 205. Material on the Valois court is mainly indebted to Chatenet's essay, unless indicated otherwise.

intended for personal enjoyment, to be shared with courtiers in the king's inner circle, or with his family, away from the more public space of the *grand salle*.

Francis I also encouraged the enhancement of court ceremonial rules, to increasing degrees of elaborateness. At Fontainebleau, select visitors such as ambassadors would first be greeted by the *premier gentilhomme de la chambre* inside the main hall then led to the king's private apartment, the *chambre*, where he would be greeted by the king himself. Francois I would then lead the ambassador through his famous gallery where his masterpieces were displayed, a measure designed to dazzle the foreign visitor with the king's erudition and magnificence. In this way a court's international reputation would be established by ambassadors who would recount the splendour that they witnessed in their despatches to their own ruler thereby ensuring that such ceremonial practices were admired and emulated in other courts.

The Gallery at Fontainebleau was kept under lock and key, and probably became his private walkway, which he also opened to a few guests.³⁸ Francis I thereby harnessed the perceived privacy of his art collection to form part of the ceremonial for greeting diplomats. Aware that they were being met in the king's private chambers, ambassadors were not oblivious to the honour that this implied, especially when Francis I would then walk them through his private gallery to reach the hall intended for their meeting. In their despatches to their monarch, ambassadors would remark on the king's courtesy, while describing the dazzling range of works of art in the private collection that they were privileged to view. Thus the private collection of paintings and precious objects, and the location of their display within the innermost rooms of Fontainebleau, came to form part of the self-fashioning of Valois royalty, a sophisticated practice that was also maintained by the first Bourbon monarch, Henry IV, who continued to employ 'the spatial dignity of the King of France', such as on the occasion of greeting the King of Spain's deputation led by Don Pedro of Toledo.³⁹

2.2.3 Italian collectors

Unlike the recreational and ornamental purpose of French gallery displays, Italian art collections were assembled with an instructive purpose, while proclaiming the glorious history of the collector and his ancestors.⁴⁰ Amongst Florentine, Roman, Genoese and Venetian collectors of the late fifteenth- and early-sixteenth century, works of art formed part of a larger collection of artefacts, such as antique sculptures, intaglios and cameos, instruments, medals and coins, as

³⁸ H. Zerner, *Renaissance Art in France: The Invention of Classicism*, Paris, 2003, quoted in Frances Gage, 'Exercise for mind, body and soul: Giulio Mancini, Collecting and the Beholding of Landscape Painting in the Seventeenth Century', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 61, 2008, 1172.

³⁹ 'Discours sur l'ordre observe' a' l'arrivée de Dom Pedre de Tholede, de la maison d'Espagne, Ambassadeur extraordinaire Envoyé par le Roy d'Espagne à Sa Majesté, lequel arriva au château de Fontaine-bleau, le Samedi 19 Juillet mil six cent huit, Lyon, 1608. Quoted in Chatenet, 'The King's Space', 203-4.

⁴⁰ Cristina de Benedictis, *Per la storia del Collezionismo Italiano*, 32-78. Material on the Italian collecting is mainly indebted to De Benedictis's book, unless indicated otherwise.

well as organic objects such as fossils, shells and gems. Such collections would be kept in the *studiolo*, a private study chamber (Fig. 22), often within cupboards built in richly decorated woodwork (the origin of the term '*cabinetto di antichità*' or 'cabinet of curiosities'). Tables in marble, or covered by thick silk carpets in oriental designs, served the purpose of enabling the viewing and studying of individual pieces of a collection. Although the *studiolo* was intended for the private use of the collector, it was also designed to leave an impression on visitors, such as other collectors and connoisseurs. Paula Findlen has demonstrated how the number of private collections throughout Italy, in small towns as well as cities, suggests that the social basis of collecting was more important than its political specificity. She compares collectors to 'princes' who regulated academies, with the former establishing 'rules of conduct for the visitors who entered their private museums, controlling the conditions of access and shaping the meaning of the experience for those whose gender, social standing and humanist credentials made them eligible to cross the threshold.'⁴¹ Collected objects were valued for the information they held on the natural world, and as embodiments of the antique culture that engendered them.

Contemporary artists too engaged with Renaissance discourses on antiquity in creative ways, leading collectors to seek out works by living artists. Amongst Italian collectors, works of art were valued for their didactic quality, as much as or even more than their splendour or decorative effect. The erudition that went into a Renaissance painting was sought out by collectors with an interest in humanist philosophy as a worthy equal for the rare and expensive ancient Greek or Roman sculptures that were extremely difficult to acquire on the Italian market.⁴² Florentine art collecting practices held two defining characteristics that may appear to be opposites. On one hand, some collectors were open to contemporary works of art, free from local and traditional schools, while on the other hand, some collectors were interested in glorifying their city's artistic and literary achievements. Cristina De Benedictis points out that with regard to Byzantine or Paleochristian art, such pieces were collected for their informative value on questions of history or faith, while their aesthetic worth would be relatively qualified in terms of the times in which they were created.⁴³ One common feature of Italian collections at the turn of the sixteenth century is that the practice was enjoyed by collectors from varied backgrounds. In the Italian ducal territories, art collecting was not the exclusive preserve of emperors, princes or dukes, but was enjoyed by persons of means such as merchants and bankers, as well as others of more modest means, since the defining feature of a humanist's art

⁴¹ Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy*, California, 1994, 98-101.

⁴² Sabba da Castiglione, *Ricordi ovvero Ammaestramenti*, Venice, 1554; Ricordo no. 109: '*Ma perché le antiche buone, sì come sono rare, così non si possono avere senza grandissima difficoltà e spesa, e però le adornano con le opera di [Donatello].*'

⁴³ Cristina de Benedictis, '*Regole per comprare collocare e conservare le pitture, di Giulio Mancini*' in *Riflessioni sulle Regole per comprare collocare e conservare le pitture, di Giulio Mancini*, ed. by Cristina de Benedictis and Roberta Roani, Florence, 2005, 19.

collection was the quality of the artistry and invention of its paintings and sculptures as well as their pictorial referencing of classical sources, irrespective of the number of works of art.

It was the presence of genuinely antique works of art that defined the grand collections, a determining factor that remained constant until the mid-eighteenth century. The Medici collection in Florence and the D'Este Gonzaga collection in Mantova, represent the high watermarks of Italian art collecting in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The ducal patronage granted to leading Tuscan and Venetian artists encouraged an increase in the number of *botteghe*, while key artists formed part of the entourage of the respective courts.⁴⁴ In the mid-fifteenth century, the Medici imitated the Burgundian court by acquiring precious metalwork and carvings of precious stones produced in the Burgundian milieu, as well as Netherlandish tapestries, that were proudly displayed when important guests such as Galeazzo Maria Sforza (1444-1476) and Pope Pius II (1458-1464) visited Florence. They also engaged Burgundian musicians for the cathedral choir and organized tournaments. Further, the Medici commissioned works of art to woo the Spanish court and the Emperor, dispatching paintings and sculptures by Florentine artists.⁴⁵ The services of artists were also mediated as gifts between patrons, such as the instance when Leonardo da Vinci was sent by Lorenzo de Medici to the court of Ludovico il Moro in Milan in 1482.⁴⁶

De Benedictis has also demonstrated how the Italian art galleries of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century grew out of the *studiolo*. She has traced the change that occurred from the introspective and intellectual purpose that was typical of the renaissance private collection with its limited yet functional and harmonious display (Fig. 23), to the public and celebratory purpose of the baroque art gallery in the communal spaces of designated corridors and loggias.⁴⁷

2.2.4 The Hapsburg court in Spain and the Spanish Netherlands

The royal Spanish art collection was founded by Charles V, at the start of the Hapsburg dynasty, and enlarged by his heir and successor Philip II, whose collecting practice demonstrated a universality of taste on a scale matched only by his Austrian cousins (Fig. 24), emperor Rudolph II (1552-1612) in Austria, and Margaret, who governed the Netherlands from 1507-1515 and again from 1519-1530, and her successor Mary of Hungary, governor from 1531-1556.⁴⁸ Philip II was one of the great collectors of his age and 'without peer in regard to the

⁴⁴ Leading examples were Andrea Mantegna, who was appointed court artist to Ludovico II Gonzaga in Mantova in 1460, as well as Leonardo da Vinci who in 1480 joined the Medici household, forming part of the constellation of artists, poets and philosophers that the Medici had established.

⁴⁵ Edward L. Goldberg, 'Spanish Taste, Medici Politics and a Lost Chapter in the History of Cigoli's 'Ecce Homo'', *The Burlington Magazine*, 134:1067, February 1992, 102-110.

⁴⁶ Charles Nicholl, *Leonardo da Vinci, the Flights of the Mind*, London, 2005, 177.

⁴⁷ De Benedictis, *Per la storia del Collezionismo Italiano*, 79-86.

⁴⁸ Brown, *Kings and Connoisseurs*, 99-107.

sheer number of his acquisitions',⁴⁹ having amassed over 1500 paintings. Earlier in the century, Margaret of Austria had brought together a collection of portraits numbering over one hundred, intended to give visibility to the strength of the Hapsburg family of alliances formed throughout Europe. She thus aligned her art patronage with a political programme, to secure her own right to govern, and to promote the cause of her father Emperor Maximilian of Hapsburg in Vienna and her nephew Emperor Charles V in Spain.⁵⁰

In the first decades of the seventeenth century, a new model of art collecting was triggered by the dispersal of old master paintings across European states, through collectors who actively sought works of art that crossed cultural regions. Paintings and other portable works of art were removed from their historic and geographic context, and in the process became an exportable manifestation of the cultural milieu that fostered their creation. In the face of a worsening economic situation, with the sale of Italian collections such as the Gonzaga d'Este one, a large number of Italian Renaissance paintings were dispersed, by being sold to augment private collections in Madrid, Paris, Prague, Bruges, and London.⁵¹ The rivalry that surfaced in the course of the acquisition of these highly sought works established art collections as an informal measure of their respective owners' wealth and authority. Leading collections, such as those of the royal Hapsburg family in Madrid, and the Spanish regents in Burgundy, were typified by a magnificence manifest in the quality of the works and their sheer quantity. The first half of the seventeenth century saw the amassing of another large royal collection in London, under the ownership of Charles I.⁵² Yet this collection, which encompassed over 1500 paintings, was to be dispersed between 1649, the year of the King's execution, and 1654. The dispersal of this collection, titled the Commonwealth Sale, triggered off a Europe-wide art-buying activity. The ebb in the fortunes of the English royal collection led to the rise in those of others in Madrid and Paris; the tide of old masters also spread to newer collections with few, if any links to royal patronage such as the collection of Everhard Jabach (1618-1695) in Paris, and that of Gerard Reynst (1599-1658) in the Dutch Republic.⁵³

2.2.5 *The Papal court*

At the turn of the sixteenth century, artists started to flock to Rome to seek the patronage of the Pontiff with commissions to decorate the new papal apartments and galleries, as well as to work for the many cardinals and prelates whose palatial residences graced the city and whose jealously cultivated art collections were the locus for the expression of intense rivalries. In

⁴⁹ Edward L. Goldberg, 'Spanish Values and Tuscan Painting', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 51: 3, Autumn 1998, 912-3.

⁵⁰ Dagmar Eichberger and Lisa Beaven, 'Family Members and Political Allies: The Portrait Collection of Margaret of Austria', *The Art Bulletin*, 77: 2, June 1995, 248.

⁵¹ Brown, *Kings and Connoisseurs*, 40; Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, 304.

⁵² Jonathan Brown described the Prince of Wales' visit to Madrid in 1623 and the opportunity for him to see the great picture collection of Philip IV as 'the culminating experience in his education as a collector'; Brown, *Kings and Connoisseurs*, 33.

⁵³ Brown, *Kings and Connoisseurs*, 90, 237.

Patrons and Painters Francis Haskell took stock of Roman art patronage by identifying ‘The Popes and their nephews [being] by no means the only patrons, but as the [sixteenth] century advanced their increasing monopoly of wealth and power made them at first the leaders and then the dictators of fashion. This process reached its climax in the reign of Urban VIII’.⁵⁴

Haskell made few references to one of the first treatises on art collecting, that by Giulio Mancini (1558-1630) written in Rome at the turn of the seventeenth century and, as will be discussed in a later chapter, which bears some relevance to Hospitaller art collecting.⁵⁵ Mancini wrote *Considerazioni sulla Pittura* c.1619-21 for princely collectors and those assisting them in assembling and displaying a collection. Although unpublished till 1956,⁵⁶ manuscript copies were widely circulated among his friends and patrons in Rome,⁵⁷ a fact explained the author’s status as physician for whom manuscripts were ‘a constant output of [his] profession’.⁵⁸ In a study on Mancini’s manuscript work, De Benedictis highlights the physician’s contribution to the growth of art collecting at the turn of the seventeenth century, particularly with one chapter outlining guidelines for buying, displaying and preserving paintings.⁵⁹ Mancini’s recommendations formalized the significance of the entirety of the collection, over the importance of the single work of art. He recommended the display of paintings along symmetrical lines relating to a central vertical axis in order to achieve an effect of equilibrium and impressive appearance; sculptures would be lined against architectural pilasters or between paintings. Mancini also recommended that paintings be displayed according to their respective theme that determined whether they were appropriate to private chambers or to more public rooms such as corridors, waiting rooms and halls.⁶⁰ Landscapes and cosmographic themes were appropriate to corridors, as were history paintings or battle scenes, portraits of illustrious persons such as popes, cardinals and emperors, or philosophers, together with emblematic pieces and heraldic devices. Devotional images of Christ, the Virgin and Saints were appropriate to private chambers and bedrooms, with miniatures displayed close to one’s bed. Paintings on profane themes, such as pictures of Venus and Mars, the four seasons, and nudes were appropriate to galleries within a garden and other private rooms on the ground floor; deities could be displayed within relatively accessible rooms whereas lascivious themes were to be displayed in private rooms, and limited to the collector’s consort and trusted friends of a less scrupulous nature.

⁵⁴ Haskell, *Patrons*, 3.

⁵⁵ Ref. Chapter II, ‘Key Magistral models in Valletta: Grand Master Perellos y Roccaful’.

⁵⁶ Mancini’s manuscript was published in two volumes by the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei as part of the series on unpublished sources for the history of art. Giulio Mancini, *Considerazioni sulla pittura*, ed. by A. Marucchi and L. Salerno, Rome, 1956-57.

⁵⁷ Frances Gage, ‘Exercise for Mind and Body: Giulio Mancini, Collecting and the Beholding of Landscape Painting in the Seventeenth Century’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 61, 2008, 1169.

⁵⁸ Silvia De Renzi, ‘A Career in Manuscripts: Genres and Purposes of a Physician’s Writing in Rome, 1600–1630’, *Italian Studies*, 66: 2, July 2011, 235-36.

⁵⁹ De Benedictis, *Regole*, 7-24.

⁶⁰ Giulio Mancini, ‘*Regole*’, transcribed in De Benedictis and Roani, *Riflessioni*, 48-51.

However Mancini's treatise was also a synthesis of the author's observations on collections that he had visited.⁶¹ The Farnese collection of famous artists' works were displayed in three halls built for the purpose, while by 1603, the Aldobrandini collection was displayed on geographical lines divided according to artistic schools by region;⁶² the Giustiniani collection had designated halls for the collection of antiques and other highly prized works; the Ludovisi collection was divided into works that were housed inside the Casino - mostly small paintings made up chiefly of images of the Madonna and Child and single saints - and large, narrative paintings displayed in the Palazzo Grande, along with the most important pieces from the Cardinal's sculpture collection, all grouped according to dimensions.⁶³ The Del Monte collection had sacred and profane portraits displayed together, as were also the landscape paintings.

In his studies, Mancini may have been referring to an earlier text, *De Cardinalatu*, by Paolo Cortesi (1471-1510) that gave advice on Roman prelates' residences and their decoration. Cortesi's book was a fore-runner to Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* and Macchiavelli's *Il Principe*, the latter two written in the vernacular whereas Cortesi's book was written in Latin, possibly explaining why his work has long been overlooked by historians.⁶⁴ Cortesi wrote with papal nobility in mind, that is, for the ranks immediately below that of pontiff. In his chapter on a Cardinal's residence, *De domo*, Cortesi adapted the conventional patriarchal model with a conjugal couple and family at its centre, by opening it out to include a Cardinal's household, a model that also anticipated the Hospitaller household in their various sumptuous *palazzi* in Malta. This is especially notable in his advice on appropriate themes for the decoration of a Cardinal's bedroom, 'And it ought to be said in the same way about bedrooms that the pictures should be symbols of virtue so that by this matutinal reminder, the soul will be excited to similarly virtuous acts [throughout the day].'⁶⁵

The previous paragraphs have attempted to provide a synthesis of the variety of art collecting forms that were engendered in the main court centres of Europe, from the fifteenth century to the early seventeenth century. By the start of the sixteenth century, patterns in art collecting practices have been shown to signal the emergence of two broad models of patronage and collecting. These two models are identifiable by the different collecting principles that guided their respective owners. The first model was seen in the sophistication and splendour of the Burgundian court, typified by the mid-fifteenth-century courtly art patronage of Philip the Good

⁶¹ Mancini, *Considerazioni sulla pittura*, 139-148.

⁶² C. D'Onofrio, 'Inventario dei dipinti del cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini compilato da G.B. Agucchi', *Palatino*, 7, 1964, 15-20, 158-162, 202-221, quoted in De Benedictis, *Regole*, 17.

⁶³ Carolyn H. Wood, 'The Ludovisi Collection of Paintings', *The Burlington Magazine*, 134: 1073, August 1992, 515-523.

⁶⁴ Kathleen Weil-Garris and John F. D'Amico, 'The Renaissance Cardinal's Ideal Palace: A Chapter from Cortesi's "De Cardinalatu"' in *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, 35, Michigan, 1980, 63.

⁶⁵ Weil-Harris and D'Amico, 'The Renaissance Cardinal's Ideal Palace', 95. On the decoration of the Grand Master's bedroom, refer to Chapter IV, 'Allegories of Charity and the Seven Acts of Mercy'

and Charles the Bold and emulated by contemporary and later generations of monarchs and emperors. The second model emerged from the intellectual endeavour and humanism expressed in the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Florentine and Venetian republics that established the foundations for the growth of private art collections.

2.3 The cultural formation of a Hospitaller knight

A pluralistic quality characterises the above-mentioned array of cultural sources that may have shaped the art collecting practices of Hospitaller knights in Malta at the turn of the seventeenth century. The following section reflects on the manner in which these varied cultural sources were assimilated and expressed through Hospitaller art collections:

‘Like other religious orders, the Hospital of St John was the beneficiary of numberless donations throughout Latin Christendom. The mainstream of its history, flowing through successive centres of its government from Jerusalem to Malta, was fed by the national tributaries from which it drew its material and human resources. These tributaries however had a life of their own, subordinate in purpose yet sometimes as fully developed as that of the great monasteries; if their spiritual function was less intense, their interaction with the society around them was fuller, and through them the history of the Knights of St John is interwoven with the religious, social, artistic, military and political life of every European country’.⁶⁶

The geographic term ‘tributary’ aptly illustrates the fluidity of the social networks that sustained the Order of St John with regular numbers of young noblemen who joined its ranks. In their youth, scions of notable families would be raised in foreign courts, a form of training and preparation for the responsibilities of dynastic rule as well as a familiarization with the practices that a ruler was to adopt as part of his or her public identity. Fresh from an upbringing and preparation in ‘life skills’ pertinent to the nobility in the royal and ducal courts of Europe, the Order’s novices and knights held expectations of an appropriately aristocratic lifestyle in adulthood, which, in its various forms of fulfilment, enriched and enlivened the Order’s cultural identity in Malta.

Within a court environment, a young nobleman could observe the shaping of an art collection and its dialectic relationship with viewers and spectators. Such an upbringing within the social and political world of the Renaissance court, could lead to a young nobleman’s understanding of art collecting through the active range of influences that shaped a collector’s cultural identity

⁶⁶ Sire, *The Knights of Malta*, 101.

and standing, as seen through the eyes of the community within which the art collector lived. Being raised in a court that included an art collection would give a young man the preparation needed to be able to engage in conversation with grander men, as well as an understanding of the display of art within the context of a grand residence. A court that included artists in its retinue would also expose a young nobleman to artistic practices, enabling a deeper aesthetic awareness of the creative process. The urban roots of his family background, especially in cities where regional artists were based, provided connections to artists' studios as well as to art markets.

An understanding of the broader history of art collecting can thus elucidate the related practices with which a Hospitaller knight would have been familiar as a young man. These practices he would later have had occasion to observe and perform, either in diplomatic service, or as a holder of one of the Order's many commanderies throughout Europe within the jurisdiction of a royal or ducal court. The well-documented life of Fra Sabba da Castiglione, an Italian knight of the Order of St John who was born in 1480 and who joined the Order in 1505, demonstrates the extent of a Hospitaller knight's cultural and political formation gained during the years of his upbringing in the Ducal courts of Milan, Pavia and Mantova, and later during his time as a diplomat in the Papal court.⁶⁷ Fra Sabba brought his cultural formation to bear on the way he maintained and improved the commandery in Faenza that he was subsequently entrusted with; he also compiled a book of observations drawn from his experience which he published for the benefit of later generations of young Hospitaller knights.

2.3.1 *Literary sources on Hospitaller art collecting*

Fra Sabba da Castiglione wrote a book on the specific norms of Hospitaller behaviour (Fig. 25), titled '*Ricordi ovvero Ammaestramenti*' ('*Memoirs, or truly, Teachings*').⁶⁸ His book was one of several sixteenth-century publications that sought to educate and instruct on desirable behaviour in public and private life.⁶⁹ Contemporary literary sources such as *Il Cortegiano* (1528)⁷⁰ by Baldassare Castiglione, a relative of Fra Sabba, and *Education of a Christian Prince* (1516) by Erasmus, shed light on the norms of behaviour of courtiers and nobles, living within the hierarchical community that gave its loyalty to a king or queen, prince or princess, duke or

⁶⁷ The literary output of Fra Sabba da Castiglione has recently been the subject of scholarly attention; Ranieri Moore Cavaceppi, *Fra Sabba da Castiglione: The Self-Fashioning of a Renaissance Knight Hospitaller* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Brown University, 2011). The thesis is available online at <http://repository.library.brown.edu:8080/fedora/objects/bdr:11214/datastreams/PDF/content>

⁶⁸ My attention was first drawn to this book, the second edition published in 1549, whilst researching in the Library of the Museum of St John in Clerkenwell (MOSJ). The third edition published in 1554 and a reprint published in 1560, are also found in the National Library of Malta (NLM). Throughout this thesis, reference is made to the 1554 edition. The earlier (1554) edition in the NLM is full of notes inscribed in the margins by the book's (unknown) owner. The second edition bears the name of a member of the Order, Fra Joseph Zammit.

⁶⁹ Peter Burke, *The fortunes of the courtier: the European reception of Castiglione's 'Cortegiano'*, Cambridge, 1995.

⁷⁰ *Il Cortegiano* was kept on the Index of Prohibited Texts, except for an expurgated edition of 1584. Jon R. Snyder, Review: The Fortunes of the Courtier by Peter Burke, in *The Journal of Modern History* (1999 The University of Chicago Press).

regent. An earlier publication, *De Cardinalatu* (1510) by Paolo Cortesi gave advice on the appropriate behaviour of cardinals and prelates in commissioning their palazzi and their decoration.⁷¹ Although *De Cardinalatu* was published in Latin, as the lingua franca for ecclesiastics and for diplomats the book would have been widely read, possibly providing the source for some of the advice given by Fra Sabba in his book. The knights of St John were raised in such circles of nobility, yet their life as Hospitallers was conducted in very different circumstances on the battlefield, at sea, and at service in the Order's Hospital. Fra Sabba's *Ricordi ...* was aimed at addressing this particular requirement.

Fra Sabba wrote this book with the purpose of providing valuable advice for his great-nephew Bartolommeo Righi, who had just joined the Order of St John as a young knight, and to whom the book is dedicated.⁷² One of the longer chapters, titled *Circa gli ornamenti della casa* (On how to embellish one's house), provides detailed advice on collecting works of art. While this chapter has informed modern studies on collecting in the Renaissance, the original Hospitaller purpose of *Ricordi* can be reclaimed by proposing a fresh interpretation of Fra Sabba's writings through a study of the guiding principles on the collecting practices of Hospitaller knights, given by the author in the chapter *Circa gli ornamenti della casa*.

2.3.2 *Ricordi ovvero Ammaestramenti*

Throughout the sixteenth century many guides on ideal behaviour were published. However the *Ricordi* is unique as a discourse on the education of a Hospitaller knight. The following is a reflection on how, by means of one chapter in particular, *Ricordo* no. 109, on art collecting in the life of a young knight, Fra Sabba da Castiglione presented one visible adaptation of the Renaissance concepts of *liberalità* and splendour in relation to the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience taken by all Knights of the Order of St John.

The reason for Sabba's joining the Order are not known with certainty, but some possibilities may be suggested: the temporary obligation of a noviciate in Rhodes was balanced by the promise of attaining one of the Order's commanderies and thereby a life in relative comfort (this turned out to be the case with Fra Sabba); also, the Castiglione family's fall from favour with Ludovico Sforza, the Duke of Milan, led them to a new alliance with Cardinal Giorgio d'Amboise, the new governor of Milan. The Cardinal was the brother of Amaury d'Amboise, Grand Master of the Order between 1503 and 1512, thus ensuring a privileged entry for the young man. Finally, the Commander of Milan, Fra Fabrizio del Carretto, was a close friend of

⁷¹ Weil-Garris, and D'Amico, 'The Renaissance Cardinal's Ideal Palace'.

⁷² Bartolommeo Righi was born to the daughter of Fra Sabba's sister. He received the Commandery of Faenza in 1544, overseeing it till his death in 1570. Santa Cortesi, ed, *Fra Sabba da Castiglione, Ricordi ovvero Ammaestramenti*, Faenza, 1999, 17.

the young Sabba, corresponding with him during his years in Rhodes, and who may have provided ample encouragement for joining the Order.⁷³

Fra Sabba's own experience, as a young knight in Rhodes in 1505, exposed him to the hazards of the battlefield, and later to the machinations of the Papal court in Rome.⁷⁴ As he rose through the ranks of the Order, Fra Sabba grew to be a widely respected man amongst his peers.⁷⁵ In 1515 he was called to the Commandery of Faenza, in the province of Ravenna,⁷⁶ a posting he followed with thorough commitment to his last days. At the *Commenda* (commandery) Fra Sabba proceeded to live as befitted a nobleman, responding in the classical tradition of *liberalità*, and in an appropriate measure of munificence, by ensuring the upkeep of the commandery, restoring its medieval church and embellishing it with artistic works, setting up a school for children from poor families, and establishing a well-stocked public library. In his private life, his humanist scholarship and sense of aesthetics remained informed through his fine collection of books and works of art. A recent study on Fra Sabba's book collection, based on his testament and eighteenth-century inventories, reveals the theological orthodoxy that underpinned his religious references in his *Ricordi*.⁷⁷ Although he was relatively withdrawn from the centres of power, Fra Sabba received high-ranking visitors who would seek his company and friendship: when Pope Clement VII visited his old friend on his way from the coronation of Charles V in Bologna, the honour thus shown to Fra Sabba was also bestowed upon his commandery and the community of Faenza.

In his old age, he planned to ensure that the commandery would be passed on to his nephew, Fra Bartolommeo. He also saw to it that the nephew would be equally capable of continuing in the uncle's footsteps. The education offered by the Order of St John was one in religious texts, and in hands-on training in warfare at sea and on land; in other words the lessons that were learnt in Convent were not sufficient to face the ways of the world.⁷⁸ Therefore Fra Bartolomeo's education needed to be augmented, especially in the turbulent post-Reformation years that had seen critical change in the fortunes of the Order of St John, which, once dispatched from Rhodes in 1523, had been destined to roam from one European court to another for seven years before settling in the island of Malta. Fra Sabba da Castiglione compiled brief chapters of teachings on ethics, governance, court life, military affairs, as well as on domestic arrangements, private entertainments, magnificence and liberality, all chapters forming a corpus of self-tuition in the liberal arts and sciences. In this way he touched upon all questions that a Hospitaller Knight

⁷³ Cortesi, ed, *Ricordi*, xvii. Fra Sabba met Clement VII at Faenza on 22 October 1529 and on 11 April 1530.

⁷⁴ For seven years in Rome between 1508 and 1515, Fra Sabba da Castiglione served Pope Julius II and later Pope Leo X on behalf of the Grand Master of the Order.

⁷⁵ Fra Sabba declined Clement VII's requests to join the papal court as his private secretary. Giacomo Bosio, *Dell'Istoria della Sacra Religione et Ill. Militia di S. Gio. Gerosolimitano*, 2nd ed., Rome, 1602, 351.

⁷⁶ The Commandery had just been vacated by Fra Sabba's friend, Fra Giulio de Medici, who headed for Rome for consecration as Cardinal (1513-1523), later to be elected Pope Clement VII (1523-1534).

⁷⁷ Moore Cavaceppi, *Fra Sabba da Castiglione*, 148-151.

⁷⁸ These reasons are given by Fra Sabba in his preamble to *Ricordi*.

would need to answer in order to advance successfully in his career. Thus was born the idea of '*Ricordi, ovvero Ammaestramenti*'.

2.3.3 Circa gli ornamenti della casa

As one of the longer chapters,⁷⁹ *Circa gli ornamenti della casa* has informed the work of several art historians on collecting in the Renaissance, and yet it still has to be studied for the impact it may have had on the collecting practices of Hospitaller knights, the subject of this thesis.⁸⁰

The study of this chapter is particularly promising when one considers the deep cultural change in the spirit of the Order of St John in the mid-sixteenth century. The new ethos was reflected particularly in the new lifestyle that was manifest in the years between 1530 and 1580, when the Order transferred itself from a medieval-style convent and hospital in Byzantine lands, to the new fully-fledged Renaissance city of Valletta. Hospitaller knights were drawn from the aristocratic families of Europe, to live in the many palatial residences that were built in the new city. Unlike Rhodes, Valletta enabled a completely different way for knights to conduct their public and private affairs, permitting living less as ascetic monks, and more as worldly noblemen, with all the trappings to which they were accustomed in their homeland.

Against this historical backdrop, some questions need to be asked: Was *Ricordi* an instigator of this change at a micro level? Did it effectively show young Hospitaller Knights how to conduct themselves in keeping with expectations wrought of the Renaissance humanist culture?

Historians of the Italian Renaissance have only recently started to examine the literary and humanistic conduct of the Order of St John in Rhodes (in the years from 1310 to 1523).⁸¹ This may seem slightly tardy when considering that at the turn of the sixteenth century, the Order of St John included at least three luminaries of the Renaissance – Pietro Bembo (later Cardinal), Pietro Aretino, and Giulio de' Medici (later Pope Clement VII). Yet, in spite of the Order's presence amongst the remains of Hellenistic culture, the fall of Constantinople in 1453 rendered

⁷⁹ *Ricordo Nro. 109* f.51-55 (9 pages).

⁸⁰ A fresh awareness of the works by Fra Sabba da Castiglione has recently been initiated in a series of publications as well as a symposium by a group of Faentine residents organised under the name of *Amici della Commenda*, bringing Italian scholarship on Fra Sabba's work to bear on the international academic arena. With the republication of Fra Sabba's *Ricordi*, his letters, his bequests, and the publication of a doctoral thesis on Fra Sabba's collection, this group has enabled a wider appreciation of the Renaissance thinker in France, Italy, and Britain. Santa Cortesi, ed., *Sabba da Castiglione (1480-1554): dalle corti rinascimentali alla Commenda di Faenza*, Proceedings of the conference held in Faenza, 19-20 May 2000, Florence, 2004; Fra Sabba da Castiglione, *Ricordi ovvero Ammaestramenti*, ed. by Santa Cortesi, Faenza, 1999; Santa Cortesi, ed., *Fra Sabba da Castiglione, Isabella d'Este e altri: Voci di un carteggio (1505-1542)* Faenza, 2004; Santa Cortesi, ed., *I due Testamenti di Fra Sabba da Castiglione*, Faenza, 2000; Antonietta Paolillo, *Fra Sabba da Castiglione: Antiquario e Teorico del collezionismo nella Faenza del 1500*, Faenza, 2000.

⁸¹ Theresa M. Vann, *Guillaume Caoursin's Description of the Siege of Rhodes, 1480* (Aldershot: forthcoming); David F. Allen, 'Catholic Synthesis of Warfare, Learning and Lay Piety on the Eve of the Council of Trent', in *The Hospitallers, the Mediterranean and Europe: festschrift for Anthony Luttrell* ed. by Karl Borchardt, Nikolas Jaspert, Helen J. Nicholson, Aldershot, 2007, 255-268; Moore Cavaceppi, *Fra Sabba da Castiglione*.

the Greek island of Rhodes a peripheral outpost, seemingly incapable of transmitting Greek learning, this due to the lack of material remains that can be dated to the Order's time in Rhodes, and abetted by Fra Sabba's own writing bemoaning his brethren's ignorance.⁸² However the idea of Hospitaller imperviousness to Renaissance culture is gradually being challenged with a better understanding of the individuals, such as Guillaume Caoursin, Fra Andrea di Martini,⁸³ and Fra Sabba da Castiglione that made up the Order's ranks in Rhodes, as well as others such as Fra Pietro Bembo, Fra Annibale Caro, Fra Pietro Aretino who took their Hospitaller vows in Italy, where they remained.

Guillaume Caoursin was the Vice-Chancellor of the Order in Rhodes from 1462, the year of the first Chapter General in Rhodes, to 1501, the year of his death. He was responsible for writing and publishing *Rhodiorum Historiae* in two editions,⁸⁴ including highly detailed woodcuts, as well as commissioning a richly illuminated manuscript of the same as a gift to Grand Master d'Aubusson.⁸⁵ In Rhodes, other Vice-Chancellors, such as Fra Melchiorre Bandini (1437-1459) and Fra Bartolomeo Poliziano (d.1522) were also known for their literary humanism.⁸⁶ Caoursin's influence on the development of Hospitaller visual culture will be discussed in the next chapter.

Pietro Bembo was influential in generating interest in portraiture of historic personages amongst Venetian collectors.⁸⁷ The inventory of his art collection commenced with a diptych by the Dutch artist Hans Memling with St John the Baptist on one panel and the Madonna and child on the other, while all the other paintings demonstrate Bembo's humanistic interest in historic and literary figures both from the classic and the recent past as seen in the numerous portraits of personages, as well as his interest in antique figurative sculptures in bronze and marble.⁸⁸ Bembo's influence on the formation of collecting practices in Venice is also being given scholarly attention,⁸⁹ though his membership in the Order of St John and corresponding cultural

⁸² Letter from Fra Sabba da Castiglione to Isabella d'Este, September 1505, Rhodes, '... glie sonno molte sculture eccellentissime et presertim in nel giardino de lo Illustrissimo et Reverendissimo Monsignor Gran Mastro, le quale per non essere cognosciute sono sprezzate, vituperate et tanto tenute a vile che iaceno scoperte al vento, a pioggia, a neve et a tempesta, le quale miseramente le consumano et guastano.' Archivio di Stato di Mantova, No. 799.

⁸³ Marilyn Perry, 'A Greek Bronze in Renaissance Venice', *The Burlington Magazine*, 117:865, April 1975, 204-211. The bronze described in this paper was discovered by Fra Andrea Martini in the course of his excavations by the walls of Rhodes; E. Vico, *Discorsi di m. Enea Vico Parmigiano sopra le medaglie de gli antichi divisi in due libri*, Venezia, 1559, 40-41, quoted in De Benedictis, *Per la Storia del Collezionismo Italiano*, 227.

⁸⁴ Guillaume Caoursin, *Rhodiorum historia*, 1480-1489, Ulm, 1496.

⁸⁵ Paris Bibliotheque Nationale, Lat MS 6067.

⁸⁶ Santa Cortesi, *Fra Sabba da Castiglione, Isabella d'Este e altri: Voci di un carteggio (1505-1542)*, Faenza, 2004, 30.

⁸⁷ De Benedictis, *Per la Storia del Collezionismo Italiano*, 69.

⁸⁸ M. Michiel, *Notizie d'opere di disegno, 1521-1534*, Bologna, 1884, 44-62, quoted in De Benedictis, *Per la Storia del Collezionismo Italiano*, 217-8; Irene Brook, 'Pietro Bembo, the goldsmith Antonio da San Marino and designs by Raphael', *The Burlington Magazine*, 153:1300, July 2011, 452-57.

⁸⁹ Irene Brook, *Pietro Bembo and the Visual Arts* (unpublished doctoral thesis, The Courtauld Institute of Art, 2001); Susan Nalezty, *Il collezionismo poetico: Cardinal Pietro Bembo and the Formation of Collecting Practices in Venice and Rome in the Early Sixteenth Century* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Temple University, 2011).

exchanges still require in-depth study. Similar lacunae on the literary figures of Aretino and Caro, and their engagement with Hospitaller values await attention.

Fra Sabba da Castiglione was one of the few who joined the Order armed with an education, having first pursued legal studies in Pavia then abandoning that life in 1505 to join the religious and military order in battle against the Turks.⁹⁰ The extraordinary opportunity to improve his knowledge of classical sculpture, in the very land of its origin, was not lost on the art-loving Milanese knight. His love for art and antiquity is revealed in his correspondence with Isabella d'Este, which demonstrates the lengths to which he was ready to go in buying antique sculptures on her behalf and to have them transported safely to her palace in Mantova.⁹¹ The experience that Fra Sabba gathered in the outlying Christian territory provided the primary material for the *Ricordi*, to be recalled and compiled years later in the solitude of his commandery in Faenza.⁹²

Fra Sabba was fully justified in thinking that such a book of advice was needed. This was borne out by the twenty-five editions that attested to its demand. The first edition of *Ricordi* was made up of seventy-two brief chapters, and was published in Bologna in 1546.⁹³ This date is significant as it overlaps by a few months the first meetings held in Trent to debate the Roman Church's position on the Reformation. These first chapters are relatively introspective and propose a way of life based on ethical integrity and religious faith, drawing principally on the teachings of St Paul, and the Stoic philosopher Seneca. With this first edition, Fra Sabba actively promoted the military and hospitaller life of a Knight, whether experienced on the battlefield, in the Order's hospitals or attending to a commandery.

Barely two years later, encouraged by public acclaim, Fra Sabba da Castiglione wrote 52 more chapters opening out his discourse to include civil life, politics, court life and princehood, to a total of 124 *ricordi*, that were published in Bologna in 1549.⁹⁴ With this second edition Fra Sabba continued to expound on an ideal life away from the centres of power, yet with advice that was directed also at higher-ranking knights, Bailiffs, Priors and even Grand Masters.⁹⁵ Indeed, the new edition concluded with a chapter on the life of a cleric.⁹⁶ *Ricordo* No.109 *Circa gli ornamenti della casa* was one of the new chapters.

⁹⁰ Cortesi, ed, *Ricordi*, xi-xii. The biographical information on Fra Sabba is drawn from Cortesi's introduction, xi-lxvii, unless indicated otherwise.

⁹¹ Santa Cortesi, ed., *Fra Sabba da Castiglione, Isabella d'Este e Altri: Voci di un carteggio 1505-1542*, Faenza, 2004. On the rivalry between Fra Sabba and other collectors, ref. Marilyn Perry, 'A Greek Bronze in Renaissance Venice', 204-211.

⁹² Sabba Castiglione, *Ricordi ovvero Ammaestramenti*, ms. 101, Biblioteca Comunale di Faenza.

⁹³ Sabba da Castiglione, *Ricordi ovvero Ammaestramenti ...*, Bologna: Bartolomeo Bonardo da Parma, 1546, with 72 short chapters

⁹⁴ Sabba da Castiglione, *Ricordi ovvero Ammaestramenti ...*, Bologna: Bartolomeo Bonardo da Parma, 1549, with 124 chapters

⁹⁵ R.73 *Quale deve esser il principe*, f.23; R.77 *Circa l'uomo grande caduto*, f.35; R123 *Del governo della citta'*, f.100.

⁹⁶ R.124, *Della vita clericale*, f.105.

Proving as popular as the first, the second edition led Fra Sabba to add nine new chapters for a third, and final, edition that was published in Venice in 1554.⁹⁷ These final chapters, written in the wake of the third meeting of the Council of Trent (1551-52) are underpinned by an apocalyptic fear of the world's corruption, and reflect the author's ascetic frame of mind possibly owing to his advancing age and sense of impending death. Twenty-one more editions followed in Venice, Milan and Mantova, with the last being published in 1613.

It is remarkable that such a book remained popular over a span of sixty-seven years, when one puts it in the context of the deep cultural, political and religious changes that took place between the mid-sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries. While the hundreds of young novices who joined the Order in these years may have read the *Ricordi*, it clearly held an appeal that reached out to a wider readership. In outlining an ideal life worthy of a nobleman yet situated away from the centre of power at court, Fra Sabba's *Ricordi* effectively presented a complete rationale not only for the young Hospitaller knight, but also for others who aspired to a noble life and wished to emulate it. This would have included those men who were barred from joining the Order, owing to a lack of aristocratic credentials, as well as women. This is attested to by the inclusion of observations for women and others concerning offspring.⁹⁸

For the centuries after his death, until the late nineteenth, Fra Sabba's works were referred to only in writings connected with the Castiglione archive, or with the Order of St John, or with Milanese texts relating to famous men and women of the region. Then, towards the end of the nineteenth century, four biographies on Fra Sabba da Castiglione were published in Italy,⁹⁹ propelled by a patriotic interest further encouraged by the publication of letters by Isabella d'Este in 1886.¹⁰⁰

The first critical assessment of the *Ricordi* was only written relatively recently, by Claudio Scarpati in 1982, setting the parameters within which Fra Sabba's opus has been regarded to date, that is, in reaction to Baldassare Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* (Venice, 1528) and Nicolo Machiavelli's *Il Principe* (Florence, 1532).¹⁰¹ Perhaps unsurprisingly, Fra Sabba's *Ricordi* is rarely ever discussed on its own terms, being overshadowed by these earlier books. Yet *Ricordi*

⁹⁷ Sabba da Castiglione, *Ricordi ovvero Ammaestramenti ...*, Venice: Paolo Gerardo, 1554, with 133 chapters.

⁹⁸ R.127, *Come la moglie debbe essere verso il marito*, f.114; R.111, *Circa il creare figliuoli*. F.61; and R.114, *Circa il ponere li nomi alli figliuoli*, f.75.

⁹⁹ E. Bonnaffé, *Sabba da Castiglione. Notes sur la curiosité italienne à la Renaissance*, *Gazette de Beaux Arts*, 55:30, 1884, pp.19-33, 145-154; A. Luzio, *Lettere inedite di Fra Sabba da Castiglione*, in *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, 13, 1886, pp.91-112; F. Peluso, *Fra Sabba da Castiglione Gentiluomo Milanese*, in *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, III, 1876, pp. 357-76, amongst others.

¹⁰⁰ A. Bertolotti, *Artisti in relazione coi Gonzaga: Atti e memorie per la Deputazione di Storia Patria per la provincia di Modena*, 1885, 224 pp.

¹⁰¹ Both Castiglione and Machiavelli were acquaintances of Fra Sabba, with Baldassare Castiglione being an older cousin.

stands apart from the settings of Castiglione's and Macchiavelli's works. Unlike *Il Cortegiano* and *Il Principe*, *Ricordi* is clearly set in a world outside courtly circles, distant from centres of power and authority. Furthermore, with the beginnings of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, the first two sessions of the Council of Trent had already taken place by 1547 separating Fra Sabba's work from the former two historic events.¹⁰²

One historian, David Allen, has recently related the *Ricordi* to the Order of St John, commenting on Castiglione's 'Catholic Synthesis of Warfare, Learning and Lay Piety on the Eve of the Council of Trent'.¹⁰³ This essay reclaims Fra Sabba's unique objective of linking the Order's twofold aims – fighting the Ottoman warrior while tending to pilgrims, the poor and the ill – with a lifestyle that reflected the teachings of Classical and Renaissance humanists.

With respect to Ricordo No. 109, *Circa gli ornamenti della casa*, scholarly interest was first shown with the publication of an essay on Renaissance collections in the *Gazette des Beaux Art* (Paris 1884).¹⁰⁴ In 1927 Roberto Longhi led other art historians by dipping into this chapter for biographical information on artists, such as Bramante,¹⁰⁵ of whom the first mention was made in Fra Sabba's *Ricordi*, and others, some of whom had long disappeared into obscurity. In the 1970s academic interest was firmly established with essays on early Renaissance art treatises by Paola Barocchi in Milan and on the Renaissance *Studiolo* by Wolfgang Liebenwien in Berlin.¹⁰⁶ The focus of these writings on Sabba da Castiglione's *Ricordi* have contributed to a better contextualized understanding of the art critical framework guiding Italian humanists between Leon Battista Alberti's *De Pictura*, of 1436, and Giorgio Vasari's *Le Vite de' piu eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettore*, of 1550/1568.¹⁰⁷

Fra Sabba's text reveals the great extent of his knowledge of earlier and contemporary forms of art criticism: he describes the excellence shown by the fifteenth-century sculptor Donatello in living up to the measure of the best Greek sculptors such as Phidias, Policletus and Praxiteles. Fra Sabba also applies this model to Michelangelo, and is amongst the first authors to deal with both Renaissance sculptors, according them prestige on the basis of their ability to emulate and

¹⁰² The third and fourth sessions took place between 1551 and 1563.

¹⁰³ David F. Allen, 'Catholic Synthesis of Warfare, Learning and Lay', 255-268.

¹⁰⁴ Edmond Bonnaffé, 'Sabba da Castiglione, Notes sur la curiosité italienne à la Renaissance', *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, 55:30, 1884.

¹⁰⁵ Roberto Longhi, *Piero della Francesca*, Florence, 1963, and later P. Murray, *Bramante Milanese* (1962) and A. Bruschi, *Bramante Architetto*, Bari, 1969, quoted in Paolillo, *Fra Sabba*, 86.

¹⁰⁶ Paola Barocchi, *Scritti d'Arte del cinquecento*, Milan, 1971; Wolfgang Liebenwien, *Lo Studiolo. Die Entstehung eines Raumtyps und Entwicklung bis um 1600*, Berlin 1977; more recently also, Dora Thornton, *Le mie cose: fra Sabba Castiglione e i suoi oggetti*, in *Sabba da Castiglione, 1480-1554: dalle corti rinascimentali alla Commenda di Faenza*, in Proceedings of the conference held in Faenza, 19-20 May 2000, ed. by Santa Cortesi, Florence, 2004.

¹⁰⁷ Amongst others whose writings referred to art are Flavio Biondo (1392-1463), Pietro Bembo (1470-1547), Paolo Giovio (1483-1582), Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571).

surpass the masters of antique sculpture.¹⁰⁸ Yet Fra Sabba's overlapping of modern and antique sculptors was soon rendered outdated by Giorgio Vasari's *Vite*, published a few months later, in 1550. Vasari outlined an entirely new model for the critique of art, by presenting it in three successive ages.

As with other literary humanists, Fra Sabba also imagined an encounter between modern artists and a god of antiquity such as Zeus, praising sculptors (Donatello, Michelangelo), architects (Bramante), and *intarsiatori* (Fra Damiano da Bergamo) in equal measure.¹⁰⁹ The esteem that Fra Sabba held for his *intarsiatore* reflects the pre-Vasarian appreciation of art as holding equal value for artisanal skill as for intellectual endeavour. In recalling the high esteem that painting held in history, he reveals a literary knowledge that was derived from his reading of Pliny.¹¹⁰

That Fra Sabba's writings on art are derived from other ancient authors, can be explained by his early exposure to classical writings in the library of Ludovico Sforza (*il Moro*) in Milan, and later, to the books in his own personal library in the *Commenda di Faenza*. To this one must add the knowledge he also derived through his personal and professional contacts as a knight of the Order of St John with erudite collectors, particularly the papal court. His familiarity with other artists also served him in good stead, starting with the Milanese court,¹¹¹ Pavia,¹¹² and the Mantuan court,¹¹³ to artists he met in Rome, or whose works he saw at first hand.¹¹⁴ This exposure took place in the first two decades of the sixteenth century, high watermarks in the development of Renaissance patronage and collecting. When he turned to writing his *Ricordi*, Fra Sabba did so out of an ingrained knowledge, understanding and appreciation of art and artists, drawing inspiration from a deep well of personal observations anchored in literary authority, yet inspired by his own Catholic faith.

On explaining why painting and sculpture were equally commendable to him, with both rising above the other liberal arts, Fra Sabba chose to illustrate his argument with the deeds of famous warriors, ending with an observation that would have held a special resonance for a Hospitaller Knight: He recounted how Alexander the Great expressed his unworthiness to mix pigments for Apelles; and how the Macedonian Demetrius diverted his siege of Rhodes (304/305BC) to

¹⁰⁸ Bartoli (1567), Cellini (1568), Bocchi (1584) presented Donatello and Michelangelo together in distinguishing them both as sculptors who surpassed the antique masters. Paolillo, *Fra Sabba*, 60.

¹⁰⁹ L.B. Alberti sets the trend for this in *De Pictura* (1435).

¹¹⁰ Pliny's *Naturalis Historiae* is cited in other instances in *Ricordi*, namely R.XLIII, CVIII, and CXX. One volume of 'Plinio' is recorded in Fra Sabba Castiglione's library; *Cabreo* (1786) in the Bibliotheca Comunale di Faenza ms 111, quoted in Paolillo, *Fra Sabba*, 62.

¹¹¹ While a young man in the circle of Ludovico il Moro, Sabba learnt of Perugino and Filippino Lippi.

¹¹² Fra Sabba met Leonardo da Vinci and other artists such as il Caradosso and Gian Cristoforo Romano while studying law at the University of Pavia; he also met Isabella d'Este first at the Castello di Pavia. Paolillo, *Fra Sabba*, 65.

¹¹³ Fra Sabba grew familiar with the work of Andrea Mantegna and Bellini while in the court of Isabella d'Este. Paolillo, *Fra Sabba*, 64.

¹¹⁴ The works of Verrocchio and Pollaiuolo were to be seen by Fra Sabba during his years in the papal court. Paolillo, *Fra Sabba*, 65.

avoid damaging the famous painting by Protogenes. Fra Sabba then lamented on the present, 'Oh depraved times, oh corrupt centuries, oh decrepit world, when the good leader [Demetrius] stopped his surge into the city showing greater respect for the work of an artist, than has been shown in our days by the Ottoman tyrant Soliman, to Our Lord Jesus Christ, Creator and Redeemer of the Universe and to St John his fore-runner.'¹¹⁵ The reference to Ottoman tyranny would have been the clearest indication to a young Hospitaller knight of the need to regard art with reverence and respect.

Fra Sabba described the warrior who revered art as one who was also knowledgeable about it, by writing of high-ranking men of his acquaintance, who boasted great riches and large collections of works of antiquity yet whose taste and understanding of art was equal to that of 'an ass'. This is consistent with the advice given by Fra Sabba throughout the *Ricordi*, to better one's life by seeking out knowledge. Asking a rhetorical question, on the belongings he would desire most in his house, Fra Sabba once more gave an answer directed to a young knight, by listing arms and books as the objects he would value most. Arms could be beautifully crafted, though they would need to be kept polished, while books would enlighten a knight to use his weapons with prudence and wisdom. To testify to the truth of this, Fra Sabba emphasised that those Romans or Greeks who were commemorated for their glorious campaigns were also literate men.¹¹⁶

Elsewhere in the *Ricordi*, Fra Sabba demonstrated his awareness of the didactic uses of art, notably sculpture, by illustrating his moral lessons with descriptions of artistic practice. For instance, in the chapter on following good examples,¹¹⁷ Fra Sabba suggests to his young nephew to seek out someone who held admirable qualities. He advised that if that were to prove too difficult to find in one person, then to do as the sculptor did, in bringing together ideal qualities of the human figure from different models, combining all into one figure. In another *Ricordo*, Fra Sabba also returned to works of art in advising his nephew on choosing appropriate gifts, recommending statues, pictures, medals, and *intagli* (engraved gems) amongst others, over less durable or reliable objects, emphasising their purpose as a worthy record of the person making the gift.¹¹⁸ To the lessons on art and collecting found in the *Ricordi*, one should also add the very example given by Fra Sabba himself, in decorating his commandery and its church, and in

¹¹⁵ 'Tutti questi tali ornamenti di sculture e di pitture sommamente laudo e commendo, perche' io trovo essa pittura appresso gli antichi essere state in tanto onore e riputazione che fu tra le arti liberali connumerati. / Leggesi il Magno Alessandro di Macedonia, dominator del mondo, non essersi sdegnato macinare li colori ad Apelle; Demetrio Policerte non voles prendere Rodò per non guastare una figura di mano di Protogene la quale era dipinta in sulla muraglia. / O tempi depravati, o secoli corrotti, o mondo decrepito e già con il destro piede dentro la fossa, poiche' quell buon capitano ebbe piu' rispetto a l'opera di un pittore che alli giorni nostri non e' avuto al gran tiranno Soliman ottomano, al N S Gesu' Christo, Creatore e Redentore dell'universo e a S. Giovanni Battista suo precursore." R.109, f.52v.

¹¹⁶ R. 109: 'troverete pochi Romani o Greci avere fatte imprese gloriose e degne di memoria che non siano stati litterati'.

¹¹⁷ R.44, f.14.

¹¹⁸ R.49, f.15.

accumulating his own collection of art and books.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, in commissioning paintings for his church, and an engraving for the frontispiece of *Ricordi*, Fra Sabba revealed an understanding of the ability of portraiture to reflect an identity that was compatible with his lifestyle as Hospitaller Knight.

To date, three public portraits of Fra Sabba da Castiglione are known.¹²⁰ His earliest depiction is found in the frescoed apse of the church of his commandery in Faenza, showing him as a pious warrior wearing a suit of armour, kneeling at the feet of the Madonna and Child Jesus, in the company of Saints Mary Magdalen and Catherine of Alexandria (Fig. 26). Fra Sabba was especially proud of this painting, executed by Girolamo da Treviso (1508-1544).¹²¹ Another fresco painting in monochrome shows the elderly knight with the Holy Family, depicted above his own tomb (Fig. 27). This was executed in 1554, by Francesco Menzocchi of Forlì (1502-1574). The third image of Fra Sabba is that of the solitary scholar-knight in his *studiolo*, in the engraving that adorned the frontispiece of his *Ricordi* (Fig. 25). Surrounded by the objects of his study, this composition brings together all the elements that Fra Sabba cherished: his nobility, represented by the Castiglione arms, his erudition, represented by his books, his piety, represented by the cross of the Order of St John that he wears round his neck, and the rosary beads hanging on the shelf behind him, and his modesty, represented by the Latin inscription. Perhaps to symbolise his own literary skills, Fra Sabba is shown in the act of writing, with the instruments used by scribes at the time: holding a quill pen in his left hand (he was left-handed, as his right hand was injured in battle) and a scraping knife or *rasorium* in his right hand, for the swift erasure of mistakes on parchment. This curved knife (also called *novacula*) was also used to cut the parchment.

It is also worthwhile to consider Fra Sabba da Castiglione's own art collection, of which quite a few pieces have survived to this very day. From an inventory of the holdings of the commandery listed in the inventory of Fra Bartolommeo at his death in 1570, a large number of artefacts are antique, such as medals and coins, and epigraphs. It is not known if these were acquired during Fra Sabba's early years in Rhodes, owing to the known difficulty of transporting such pieces to Italy (although the latter did not dampen the young knight's enthusiasm in proposing, to his earlier patron Isabella d'Este Gonzaga, to ship the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus to Mantova).¹²² It is believed that this collection was brought together in his later years, during his travels on behalf of the Grand Master of the Order to various courts, while meeting other humanists and collectors. Fra Sabba's love for antiquity also determined

¹¹⁹ Santa Cortesi, ed., *I Due Testamenti di Fra Sabba da Castiglione*, Faenza, 2000.

¹²⁰ A fourth portrait was recently discovered by Dora Thornton at the British Museum, in the form of an engraved gem. Luke Syson and Dora Thornton, *Objects of Virtue: Art in Renaissance Italy*, (2001) p.XX

¹²¹ "...la mia chiesa della Magione di Faenza, ove tutta via arditamente combatte con l'opera di Travisi, questo certo per la sua rara e singolar virtù è molto da me amato, ma non manco per i suoi onesti costumi e bontà di vita li quali rade (rare) volte si trovano insieme nelli pittori." R.109, f.52.

¹²² Perry, 'A Greek Bronze in Renaissance Venice', 206.

his choices in contemporary works, commissioned once he was settled at the *Commenda*. One piece of which he was particularly proud was the marble bust of the young St John the Baptist, which he described in *Ricordo* 109 as by the hand of 'Donato' (Donatello, 1386-1466), whom he admired for his ability to emulate the antique (Fig. 28). '...although I am a poor knight, I have decorated my small studio with an extraordinarily beautiful bust of St John the Baptist, aged around 14 years, in the round, in Carrara marble, by Donato [Donatello], about whom, if no other work of his were to be found, this bust alone would have made him immortal.'¹²³ Other pieces listed in *Ricordo* no. 109, are a relief of St Jerome by Alfonso da Ferrara (1497-1537) in terracotta (Fig. 29), painted to appear as bronze, and a panel painting SS Paul and John the Baptist, by Fra Damiano di Bergamo.¹²⁴

In choosing these religious subjects, executed by contemporary Renaissance artists, Fra Sabba da Castiglione embodied the ideal Hospitaller Knight as collector. The lessons he imparted in the *Ricordi* to young Hospitallers, especially in his chapter dealing with art and collections, brought together humanistic scholarship and religious devotion. Thus did Fra Sabba da Castiglione present his appreciation of art, of sculpture and of antiquity in *Ricordo* 109, in ways that were directed at Knights of the Order of St John. This publication can be regarded to have provided one catalyst that led to cultural change that occurred in the Order in the mid-sixteenth century. Fra Sabba da Castiglione's advice to a young Hospitaller knight on how to conduct himself in keeping with expectations wrought of the Renaissance humanist culture also provided the rationale for a Knight to indulge in the worldliness of collections while remaining true to the religious spirit of the Hospitaller's vocation. With the example set by his own life, Fra Sabba da Castiglione provided a model for them to emulate, as befitted '... *un vero religioso cavaliere di S. Giovanni*'.¹²⁵

2.4 Summation

With historical and social sources ranging from classical authors to the models established by the courts in Burgundy, France, Italy and Spain, Fra Sabba's *Ricordi ovvero Ammaestramenti*, and in particular his chapter relating to art patronage and collecting can be viewed as a distillation of the widespread sources of cultural influence shaping art collecting in the mid-sixteenth century. The synthesis of antique sources and contemporary values, provides an extraordinary mirror of the significance of art patronage and collecting at a critical, transitional

¹²³ "...Ancora io, avvegno che sia un pover cavaliere, adorno io mio picciolo studiolo di una testa di S. Giovanni Battista, di eta' di anni circa quattordici, di tutto tondo, di marmo di Carrara, bellissimo, dimano di Donato, la quale invero e' tale che se altra opera di sua mano non si trovasse, questa sola e una basterebbe a farlo al mondo eterno e immortale." R.109, f.53. The sculpture is no longer attributed to Donatello, and is now ascribed to an unknown sixteenth-century artist.

¹²⁴ R.109, f.53.

¹²⁵ Proemio to *Ricordi*, p. 1: Fra Sabba urged his nephew to aim at becoming '... a true and religious knight of St John'.

period in European social history and thereby bridges Renaissance values steeped in studies from antiquity, with Counter-Reformation precepts of piety and faith.

Fra Sabba's writings in Italian were also part of a broader trend in mid-sixteenth-century art patronage and collecting, that introduced the practice to the wider social strata of patrons who did not belong to any court, yet who came to enjoy the pleasure of building up a personal collection of works of art, books, armour and other valued objects holding significance or preciousness. In particular, *Ricordi* ... was also unique in the guidance on art collecting it offered to members of religious orders who, differently from art collectors within the patriarchal family unit whose values were signified by more worldly ambitions, lived within conventions centred around piety and charitable acts.

III: MODELS OF ART PATRONAGE: TRANSMISSION AND EXCHANGE

This chapter examines how the models of art patronage and art collecting that were surveyed in the previous chapter were transmitted to the Order of St John and subsequently modified to reflect the Order's statutory requirements. The chapter demonstrates how four Grand Masters, namely Jean de la Cassière, Hugues Loubenx de Verdalle, Alof de Wignacourt and Raymond Perellos y Roccaful, adopted practices in art patronage and collecting that were contemporarily appropriate to sovereigns, formulating symbolic yet effective means of establishing political stability within the Order's ranks in the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth century, later building up to the centrist, absolutist magistral role of the eighteenth century. The chapter also covers statutory aspects that concerned magistral authority with respect to art patronage and the recruitment of artists within the ranks of the Order. The roles of artists and connoisseurs amongst Hospitaller knights will also be discussed as informal models of influence in magistral art collecting.

3.1 Burgundian influence on the magistral court of the Order of St John

The Burgundian model of art patronage is visible in the formation of magistral art patronage as seen in the secular works of art which first surfaced during the Order's years in Rhodes, and later crystallized in the course of the late sixteenth century with the building of Valletta. The models of art patronage and art collecting which were established by the fifteenth century at the ducal courts of Burgundy, and at the royal court of the Valois in France were visibly linked to the headship of a state. Marina Belozerskaya has made a compelling case¹ for establishing Burgundian court culture as 'a potent model for sovereign displays by the exquisite quality and stupefying quantity of creations through which they manifested their ascendancy.'² The Burgundian model was emulated by monarchs and regents throughout Europe, as well as by popes and dukes in the Italian states. Spanish diplomatic ties with the Netherlands and with the Burgundian realm through royal marriages stimulated the diffusion of Burgundian cultural models and artefacts in the Iberian Peninsula.³ The Order of St John was not immune to the political and cultural significance of the visual language of power engendered by the Burgundian court. After its ousting from Rhodes in 1523, the Order was drawn to a greater dependence on the support of monarchs for its survival, even though the Order of St John pledged its allegiance to the Pope irrespective of the Vatican's political alliances and enmities.

¹ Anne Simonson, Review: Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, in *Renaissance Quarterly*, 57:2, Summer 2004, 671-672; Dagmar Eichberger, Review: Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, in *The Burlington Magazine*, 145:1203, June 2003, 453-4.

² Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, 146.

³ Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, 160-179; Brown, *Kings and Connoisseurs*, 99.

The fiefdom of Malta from Charles V was accepted by the Order after deliberating for seven years, while fully cognizant of the supremacy in numbers of French knights within its ranks. By the second half of the sixteenth century, the Order harnessed the visual language of power to balance the conflicting interests of its members and to establish itself as a leading player in Mediterranean politics.

In the transmission of values from Burgundian court culture, including aspects relating to art patronage and art collecting, the trans-regional involvement of ambassadors became pivotal, a factor that was relevant to the Order of St John with its corps of Hospitaller knights trained in the courtly art of diplomacy.⁴ By the mid-sixteenth century, the additional importance of a Hospitaller being versed in art and collecting had already been highlighted by Fra Sabba da Castiglione, as an important measure in a knight's diplomatic formation.⁵ In the course of the seventeenth century, following the notable growth of royal art collections in Madrid, Antwerp and London, the ambassador's representation of the monarch-collector took on a new dimension through his privileged position in enjoying informal exchanges with other collectors (Fig. 30).⁶ This factor was equally pertinent to the Order's corps of priors, receivers and commanders in various locations throughout Europe.

The Order's European network of these diplomats and priors was useful for the acquisition of works of art and their subsequent despatch to the Order's headquarters in Malta. Hospitaller knights manned the Order's Priors and Commandaries all over Christian Europe; together with those knights who were engaged in diplomatic service, these Hospitaller networks enabled the Order's members to acquire works of art from the main courts and cities of Europe. Conversely, those knights in Rhodes and later in Malta were able to acquire works of art from these lands and to dispatch them to private collectors in Europe. In early sixteenth-century Rhodes, at the request of Isabella d'Este, Fra Sabba da Castiglione acquired classical sculptures from Greece,⁷ while in seventeenth-century Malta, Fra Mattia Preti kept his art patron in Messina, Don Antonio Ruffo, informed on the works of art from Hospitaller collections that were about to be sold by the Order's *Comun Tesoro*.⁸

⁴ David Allen, 'The Order of St John as a 'School for Ambassadors' in Counter-Reformation Europe', in *The Military Orders vol. 2: Welfare and Warfare* ed. by Helen Nicholson, Aldershot, 1998, 363-379.

⁵ Sabba da Castiglione, *Ricordo 109, circa gli ornamenti della casa*

⁶ Jerry Brotton and David McGrath, 'The Spanish acquisition of King Charles I's art Collection: The letters of Alonso de Cárdenas, 1649 – 51', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 20:1, 2008, 1–16.

⁷ For the correspondence between Fra Sabba and Isabella d'Este between 1505 and 1508, refer to Cortesi, ed., *Isabella d'Este e altri*, 2004.

⁸ Letters dated 17 December, 1661, 24 September and 21 October, 1662, 27 March 1663 in the Ruffo archives, quoted in John T. Spike, *Mattia Preti: the Collected Documents* (Taverna, 1998) p.147, 154-5. The 1661-62 correspondence between Preti and Ruffo mentions two paintings by Titian while the 1663 correspondence concerns a painting by 'Luca Forte' being sold in Naples by the Receiver of the Order. Later correspondence cites paintings by Tintoretto, Veronese, Van Dyck and Cavaliere d'Arpino as well as a 'Marte e Venere' by Titian; Letters dated 2 May, 1663, and 17 September, 1663, in the Ruffo Archives. Spike, *Preti: The Collected Documents*, 167.

Furthermore, the Papal Court in Rome, with its direct links to the Order of St John, provided more than a political reference, through the magnificent collections of antique and contemporary works of art accumulated by popes and cardinals,⁹ amidst the presence of probably the largest corps of diplomats and ambassadors, all vying to establish their rank, in an environment of fierce competition for the Pope's favour.¹⁰ Rome also attracted artists seeking patronage from a rich pool of patrons including knights of the Order of St John, some of whom acted as agents for the Grand Master in Malta.

The Order's Receivers in Hospitaller priorates overseas, whose role was to collect the Order's revenues, also played a modest, yet crucial, part in the acquisition of works of art, mainly in effecting payment to artists. In 1658, Fra Giovanni Battista Brancaccio, the Order's Receiver in Naples, was entrusted with keeping Grand Master Martin de Redin updated on the progress of a painting of St Francis Xavier that had been commissioned from Mattia Preti, as well as to effect payment on its completion.¹¹

The Order's representatives in Italy also harnessed the ready availability of antique art and the proximity of a choice of artists' studios to build their own art collections. Outstanding amongst these was the afore-mentioned Fra Giovanni Battista Brancaccio (d.1686), Receiver of the Order in Naples. Brancaccio was a major art collector amongst Hospitaller knights in Malta, owning 103 paintings, and leasing another 137 paintings for the embellishment of his Valletta residence, as shown by the inventories in his *spoglio*.¹² Another outstanding example was the Grand Prior of France, Philippe de Bourbon, Duke of Vendôme (1655-1727) who was a great patron of the arts, having started his art collection during his years in Italy. He later supported an entourage of artists in his Paris residence.¹³

Another aspect of Burgundian art patronage which was adopted by the Order of St John was related to magnificence in gifts, established by Burgundian dukes and adopted by monarchs throughout Europe. Gifts presented by allies of the Order, or by visiting ambassadors or royal visitors, would be kept in the Palace, or displayed within a communal location. One such gift was a bronze statue (Fig. 31) attributed to Leone Leoni (1509-1590) presented to Grand Master Verdalle by Gian Andrea Doria, nephew of the noble Genoese admiral, during a courtesy visit to Malta in 1584.¹⁴ In reciprocation, the Grand Master presented Doria with another gift from

⁹ Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Sixteenth Century Italy*, London, 1996, 64-77.

¹⁰ AOM 927, f.178: Bali Fra Teodoro Hermann Barone de Shaden, *Ambasciatore del S. Ordine Gerosolimitano appresso la Santa Sede*: On the costs of illuminations and extraordinary decorations as expected of ambassadors, since his appointment in May 1724.

¹¹ AOM 1434, *Registro di lettere spedite dal G.M. Redin 1658*, ff.96, 118; ASBN, Banco del SS.Salvatore, *Giornale copiapolizze di cassa*, matr.75, 30 Agosto 1658; quoted in Spike, *Preti: The Collected Documents*, 110-111.

¹² AOM 931 (31) No. 16, ff. 85-90, ff. 118v-122v.

¹³ On Vendôme's patronage, refer to Chapter IV.

¹⁴ Bartolommeo del Pozzo, *Historia della Sacra Religione militare di S. Giovanni Gerosolimitano detta di Malta*, II, Venice, 1715, 255. It has been proposed that a earlier possibility for the presentation of the sculpture to the Grand

amongst the Order's precious treasures: a goblet, attributed to Holbein, in pure gold encrusted with precious stones that Henry VIII had given to Grand Master de l'Isle Adam during his visit to the king in 1528.¹⁵ Also towards the end of the sixteenth century, Henry IV (1553-1610) presented a portrait of himself to two Knights, de Bats and Roquelaire, to acknowledge their assistance during the war of religion just before the Siege of Paris of 1590. The portrait may have subsequently been presented by the knights as a gift to their Grand Master, as it was seen prominently displayed in the Grand Master's cabinet of treasures together with the donor's autograph letter.¹⁶ In 1743, on taking up office as Inquisitor in Malta, Paolo Passionei presented the painting 'Madonna, Child Jesus and Young St John the Baptist' by Sebastiano Conca (1680-1764), to the Grand Master Pinto.¹⁷ In later years, gifts to the Grand Master were made in the form of royal and papal portraits, most of which are still displayed inside the Magistral Palace to this day. In 1790, Catherine the Great sent her portrait by Dimitry Levitsky (1735-1822) to Grand Master de Rohan, an intimation of the Empress's growing interest in Mediterranean geo-politics (Fig. 32).¹⁸ Another painting in the national art collection of Malta, the Madonna and Child and St John the Baptist, by Carlo Maratta (Fig. 33), until recently had an elaborate frame with the coat of arms of Queen Christina of Sweden, which may also have been a gift to the Order of St John in the seventeenth century. Though most of the portrait-gifts still await archival research, it would not be amiss to surmise that such gifts may have been made on an auspicious occasion and may have also been reciprocated with a magistral portrait.¹⁹

The Order's Grand Masters were well-versed in the diplomatic art of the giving and receiving of gifts, although the Order held a greater esteem for gifts of relics, albeit presented within splendidly crafted monstrances and reliquaries. The preference for relics as diplomatic gifts to

Master may have occurred around 1551. Giovanni Bonello, 'The Palace 'Neptune': A portrait of Andrea Doria by Leone Leoni', in *Art In Malta: Discoveries and Recoveries*, Malta, 1999, 17-25.

¹⁵ Bosio, *Dell'Istoria della Sacra Religione*, II, Rome, 1594, 453. The Holbein goblet may have acquired distasteful connotations for the Order, owing to the excommunication of Henry VIII its donor, which facilitated its distancing from the Palace collection. For possibly similar reasons, a personal gift to Grand Master de L'Isle Adam by Queen Catherine of Aragon, first wife of Henry VIII, of a solid gold basin studded with diamonds, rubies and pearls, was given in 1566 to Don Francesco d'Avalos, leader of the troops sent by Philip II to the Order's aid at the end of the Siege of 1565. Giovanni Bonello, 'Table Ceremonial in the Grand Master's Court', in *Histories of Malta IV: Convictions and Conjectures*, Malta, 2003, 87.

¹⁶ Samuel Cowdy, 'Malta and its Knights', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 3, 1874, 403. Cowdy saw the portrait and transcribed the letter, describing it as a 'small literary curiosity'. The portrait and the letter are only known from Cowdy's writing.

¹⁷ Dominic Cutajar, *Museum of Fine Arts, Valletta, Malta, A commentary on its history and selected works*, Malta, 1991, 38. The painting (Inv. No. 385 FAS/P/265) was transferred to the National Museum of Fine Arts from the Central Hospital. It may be the same painting attributed to 'Italian School', listed in Lintorn-Simmons, *Description of the Governor's Palaces*, 183, from the Chapel of the Floriana Hospital, the *Ospizio*.

¹⁸ In the wake of the French Revolution, particularly after the execution of Louis XVI, the Order of Malta was vulnerable to overtures by other monarchs in its sudden loss of its major source of revenue; this is revealed by diplomatic correspondence regarding the possibility of the Order's re-establishment of diplomatic relations with France in 1795, including mention of Catherine II's intentions on Malta: Alain Blondy, 'Malta and France 1789-1798: The Art of Communicating a Crisis', in *Hospitalier Malta*, 675, 679.

¹⁹ For one instance of a portrait being commissioned to be despatched overseas, AOM 1071, v.2, f.6: Entry dated 2 August 1779, 'Scudi Quattro cento, pagati al Discreto Favray, d'ordine di S Em.za per aver fatto in grande il Ritratto di Sua Santità per la Sala di Palazzo. Più per un Ritratto di S Em.za che é stato mandato in Francia', quoted in Emmanuel Fiorentino, 'Portraits and Other Easel Paintings at the Palace', in *Palace of the Grand Masters in Valletta*, ed. by Albert Ganado, Malta, 2001, 210 fn.7. The more famous portrait of Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt by Caravaggio was also despatched overseas, probably as a gift within Wignacourt's lifetime.

monarchs lasted at least until the first half of the seventeenth century, as demonstrated by Grand Master De Paule's gift of part of the holy relic of the right hand of St Anne, detached as a very special concession 'by an impulse of affection' for the French queen, Anne of Austria, who had given birth to the Dauphin.²⁰ Amongst high-ranking members of the Order, relics continued to hold strong currency as gifts well into the eighteenth century, as shown by Grand Master Pinto's efforts in 1749 to secure the skull of Blessed Gerard, the founder of the Order. In 1765, the Order's ambassador in Paris presented a relic of St Louis of France to the Grand Master in Malta, amid spectacular pomp.

3.2 Courtly art in Rhodes

Relatively little is known on Hospitaller art collecting or art patronage during the Order's time in Rhodes. Yet by the turn of sixteenth century and the fruition of high renaissance ideals in European cities, a number of factors in the Order's material culture are now apparent that indicate an informed and enlightened emulation of Burgundian court practice, interlaced with a comparable awareness of the refinement of Islamic court culture.²¹ To date, insufficient attention has been given to magistral court life in Rhodes to understand the full extent of the Order's art patronage before 1523, because the cultural phenomenon of the high renaissance within the Order of St John has been demarcated by its religious character and purpose. However, well before the Order's arrival in Malta in 1530, its Grand Masters were already familiar with Burgundian expressions of art patronage and its purpose within the scope of governance through the communicative power of the visual arts. The Order's historians gave detailed accounts of the Order's treasures of relics, icons and the respective monstrances and reliquaries which were transported from Rhodes in 1523.²² Inventories and accounts of the Order's treasures describe treasures such as chalices and other artefacts which formed part of religious rites and practices, some of which were of great antiquity, including icons of Our Lady of Damascus (Fig. 34), the Eleimonitria Madonna (Fig. 35) and the miraculous icon of Our

²⁰ AOM 1953 ff.98r-v.

²¹ In the course of its years in Palestine between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, the Order of St John had also been exposed to the refinement of Islamic culture. As with other points of western contact with medieval Arabic culture, Hospitaller knights were aware of Saracen court ceremonial and may also have been instrumental in transmitting aspects of Islamic culture into European courts. One episode in Hospitaller history, from the late fifteenth century, was the well-publicized encounter in Rhodes between Grand Master Pierre D'Aubusson (1476-1503) and Prince Zizim, the banished son of Mohamet II in 1478-79: the ceremonials that were observed over dinner and other meetings demonstrates the lengths to which both distinguished aristocrats went to display courteous behaviour and their noble breeding in keeping with the usages of their own laws and nations. Guillaume Caoursin, *De casu regis Zyzimi commentaries*, Ulm, 1496, quoted in Bonello, 'Table Ceremonial', 82. The Turkish prince was also known as Prince Djem; Friedrich Sarre, 'The Miniature by Gentile Bellini Found in Constantinople Not a Portrait of Sultan Djem', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 15: 76, July 1909, 237-238.

²² Giacomo Bosio, *Dell'Istoria della Sacra Religione et ill.ma Militia di San Giovanni Gerosolimitano*, vol. II, Rome, 1630.

Lady of Philermos (Fig. 36).²³ Additionally, an illustrated inventory of the Conventual church's treasures was compiled in the mid-seventeenth century, giving prominence to the splendour of the antique gold and silver artefacts.²⁴

Much has been read into the relatively extensive knowledge of the Order's *ecclesiastical* treasures and the corresponding absence of any knowledge on *secular* artistic and decorative artefacts. In principle, this has generally been explained as a demonstration of the Order's primary concern with its own organizational and territorial problems, while its ranks were filled with men whose prime interest was warfare.²⁵ A simpler explanation may be found in the Order's statutes which prohibit the alienation of ecclesiastical treasures from the Conventual church, and which encourage the dispersal of privately-owned works of art (amongst other items of property) through the sale of property in order to fund the Order's finances.²⁶ In spite of this not insignificant statutory detail, the prominence of the Order's early Hospitaller role and its later warrior role has continued to be perceived as implying a cultural desert in the life of a Hospitaller knight. This view was also echoed by the reproachful terms expressed in a single, but prominent, contemporary account, that given by the young Fra Sabba in his correspondence with Isabella d'Este.²⁷ Fra Sabba described his living arrangements in Rhodes, from 1505 to 1508, as surrounded by classical architecture while decrying the ignorance of Grand Master d'Amboise (1503-1512) whose garden was strewn with excellent sculptures abandoned to the elements.²⁸

Furthermore, such a limited view is restricted by viewing the Order at its outpost on the periphery of Christian Europe, and ignoring the large presence of Hospitaller knights in the Order's priorates and commanderies throughout European lands. Their involvement in the world

²³ The icons were brought to Malta by Rhodiots who accompanied the Knights on their departure from Rhodes in 1523; therefore it is possible they may not originally have belonged to the Order. A. Luttrell, 'The Rhodian Background of the Order of St John on Malta' in *The Order's Early Legacy in Malta*, ed. by Can. John Azzopardi, Malta, 1989, 13.

²⁴ ACM Ms 151, Hieroslm.S.Joannis, T.LVII, *Inventario degli Ori e Argenti delle Chiese dell'Ordine*, 1687; an illustrated copy of the manuscript was made by Rev. Luigi Maria Carbone in 1880 and deposited with the archives of the Order in the National Library of Malta.

²⁵ Hospitaller Rules discussed the training of novices and young knights in terms of their *military* skills. The Rules occasionally established requirements relating to dress and conduct, while no mention was made of religious instruction. Williams, 'Boys will be Boys', 179-84.

²⁶ Following the Chapters-General held under Jean Fernandez de Heredia between 1376 and 1396, all things designated for divine worship found amongst the belongings of Hospitaller knights were presented to the Conventual church, together with all ornaments excluding gold, silver and precious stones; René de Vertôt, *Histoire des Chevaliers Hospitaliers de S. Jean de Jerusalem, Appellez Depuis Les Chevaliers de Rhodes et aujourd'hui Les Chevaliers de Malte par M. L'Abbe' de Vertôt, de l'Academie des Belles Lettres*, IV, Paris, 1726, 23.

²⁷ Letter from Fra Sabba da Castiglione to Isabella d'Este, September 1505, Rhodes, '... *glie sonno molte sculture excellentissime et presertim in nel giardino de lo Illustrissimo et Reverendissimo Monsignor Gran Mastro, le quale per non essere cognosciute sono sprezzate, vituperate et tanto tenute a vile che iaceno scoperte al vento, a pioggia, a neve et a tempesta, le quale miseramente le consumano et guastano.*' Archivio di Stato di Mantova, No. 799 published in Cortesi ed., *Isabella d'Este e Altri*, 9.

²⁸ The young Fra Sabba may have been inflating his erudition to gain favour with the recipient of his letter. Grand Master d'Amboise was an art patron, who commissioned a magnificently composed tapestry (possibly one of a series) and may have also been a vital link in the commissioning by L'Isle Adam (later Grand Master) of the Order's Choral books.

of artists as patrons and collectors at the turn of the fifteenth century is still awaiting study. Little information is yet known on whether artistic objects or decorative artefacts were used as tangible mediators in communication between the Grand Master and his court in Rhodes and the various priors, balis and ambassadors in mainland Europe. In addition, the presence of Italian humanists such as the scholar Pietro Bembo (1470-1547) who proudly held the Order's title of Prior of Hungary,²⁹ the poet Pietro Aretino (1492-1556), poet and translator of the Order's statutes from Latin to Tuscan Italian, Paolo del Rosso (1505 – 1569),³⁰ and the poet and translator of Virgil's *Aeneid*, Annibale Caro (1507-1566), the Spanish poet and dramatist, Lope Feliz de Vega Carpio (1562-1635),³¹ as well as the French writer of romance literature, Honoré D'Urfé (1568-1625), in the ranks of the Order of St John, during the sixteenth century, suggests that a knighthood in the Hospitaller Order held greater value than merely chivalric honour.

In his 1993 essay on Hospitaller art history in Malta, John Gash pointed out that, 'Our knowledge of the artistic situation on Rhodes during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is sketchy, with some important questions still unresolved. To what extent, for example, did the Knights, with their international, west European connections, import artists or works of art from the West, or did they rely predominantly, as seems to have been the case, on Greek craftsmen?'³² Nearly two decades later, the question has remained largely unanswered. This problem may now be indirectly resolved through the challenge, made by recent scholarship on Burgundian court arts by Marina Belozerskaya,³³ that has questioned historians' privileging of Italian painting and sculpture over other forms of the luxury arts (including the performing arts) which fulfilled a practical purpose. The effective case that Belozerskaya makes for a better understanding of the actual supremacy of Burgundian art patronage of the luxury arts, could lead to a new understanding of the Order's investment of choice in the luxury arts, which extended beyond ecclesiastical treasures to illustrated manuscripts, tapestries, and choral books that subsequently implied patronage of the performing arts.

²⁹ Bosio, *Istoria dell'Ordine di Malta*, Vol II, 504; Carlo Antonio di Villarosa, *Notizie di alcuni Cavalieri*, Naples, 1840, 30: '...essendo egli Cavaliere Gerosolimitano fin dalla prima età che andò con suo Padre a Firenze (come attesta il Quirini nella 'Porpora Veneta' pag.142) gli fu dal Pontefice Giulio II conferita la Commenda di Pola; e dal medesimo, essendogli stato mandato dalla Dacia un antico Libro scritto con abbreviature, che niuno sapeva interpretare, fu dal Papa dato al Bembo per intenderlo. Felicemente questi ne fece l'interpretazione, per cui entrò in maggior grazia di quel Pontefice, e si vuole che ad istanza del Duca di Urbino fosse provveduto della pingue Commenda di S. Gio. Gerosolimitano di Bologna. Dimise la divisa dell'Ordine Gerosolimitano quando diventò Ecclesiastico', quoted in Bonello, 'A Knight of Malta for Lucretia Borgia' in *Histories VI: Ventures and Adventures*, Malta, 2005, 22. Pietro Bembo did not undertake his noviciate in Rhodes, nor was he present during the Siege of Rhodes in 1523.

³⁰ Giovanni Bonello, 'Paolo del Rosso, knight, assassin, poet', 3-part essay, *The Sunday Times [of Malta]* 22 April, 29 April, and 6 May 2012. Del Rosso also wrote verse on works of art by Cellini, Michelangelo, Bronzino and Donatello; Paolo Simoncelli, *Il Cavaliere Dimezzato*, Italy, 1990, 41, 174, 176-7, 193.

³¹ Lope de Vega was ordained a priest in 1614 and made a Knight of St John by Pope Urban VIII in 1628. Julia Toffolo, *Image of a Knight: Portrait prints and drawings of the Knights of St John in the Museum of the Order of St John*, London, 1988, 34-35.

³² Gash, 'Painting and Sculpture in Early Modern Malta', 512.

³³ Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*.

A study of some key artistic treasures from the Rhodes period, would challenge the perception of an absence of Renaissance sensibilities amongst Hospitaller knights. This period witnessed the production of a jewel of early Renaissance book design – Guillaume Caoursin’s richly-illuminated manuscript of the Siege of Rhodes,³⁴ as well as its published version.³⁵ These books demonstrate the Hospitaller author’s aspiration to patronage of a fine work of art as well as his awareness of the potential held by works of art, through the book’s illustrations, to effectively and persuasively communicate Hospitaller values. Another, equally precious, instance of decorative art intended for secular purposes, is the case of the set of tapestries that were removed from Rhodes in 1523, which until recently have only been known from documentary sources.

The following two instances of Renaissance art patronage, for works that held an entirely secular purpose, serve to illustrate the case for a smoother transition in Hospitaller aesthetic values than has been imagined so far. The splendour of the two examples coupled with their functional purpose is an effective indicator that the Order’s choice of renaissance art for the magistral court was based on the model of art patronage established by the Burgundian court.

3.2.1 *Obsidionis Rhodiae urbis descriptio* by Guillaume Caoursin

Guillaume Caoursin was the Vice-Chancellor of the Order from 1462 until his death in 1501. He moved to Rhodes during the build-up in Mediterranean tensions which started at the fall of Constantinople in 1463 to Turkish might led by Mahomet II who, in 1480, turned his forces onto Rhodes. After a siege lasting eighty-nine days, Turkish troops turned away, leaving the Grand Master Pierre d’Aubusson (1476-1503) and his Hospitaller Order victorious. That same year Caoursin wrote an account of the siege in Latin, titled *Obsidionis Rhodiae urbis descriptio*, and had it published in Ulm (Fig. 37). Its narrative appealed to the late medieval ideas of chivalry and the noble pursuit of war in defence of Christendom. The book’s chapters were interspersed with full-page woodcut illustrations that act as an integral part of the narrative. It was reprinted two years later and republished with other historical writings by Caoursin and titled *Rhodiorum Historia* (1496).³⁶ Its success in the Latin original led to its translation, thus ensuring a wider readership. The book was translated into English in 1483 by John Kaye,³⁷ and another two editions were printed before 1500,³⁸ leading to a Europe-wide familiarity with the exploits of the Hospitaller Order and their victory at the Siege of Rhodes. The publication of

³⁴ Paris Bibliothèque Nationale, Lat MS 6067.

³⁵ Guillaume Caoursin, *Rhodiorum Historia*, 1480-89, Ulm, 1496.

³⁶ Guillaume Caoursin, *Rhodiorum historia* 1480-1489, Ulm, 1496.

³⁷ John Kaye, *The Siege of Rhodes*, London, 1483, quoted in Theresa M. Vann, ‘John Kaye, the ‘Dread Turk’, and the Siege of Rhodes’, in *The Military Orders Vol 3: History and Heritage* ed. by V. Mallia Milanese, Aldershot, 2008, 245-252.

³⁸ *The Dylectable Newesse and Tithynges of the Glorious Victorye of the Rhodyans Agaynst the Turkes, translated from the Latin of G. Caoursin by Johan Kaye (Poete Laureate)*, Westminster, 1490, quoted in Vann, ‘John Kaye’, 245-52.

Descriptio led to a surge in the number of new recruits within the Order: young men inspired by the ideals of chivalry and honour in the service of religion, eager to sign up to the Order's ranks. As a fortuitous illustration of the book's effective appeal to young men who signed up to join the Order, a copy of the Ulm edition, which is now in the National Library of Malta, once belonged to Fra Sabba da Castiglione, who also signed it. The book later belonged to Fra Giacomo Bosio, the Order's historian who therein placed a note attesting to the book's history. In the generation after 1480, the number of knights in Rhodes increased by over one third, as young men flocked to the citadel 'of that fabled chivalry'.³⁹

Shortly after the publication of the book, in the course of travelling to France between 1482 and 1483, Caoursin commissioned a richly-illuminated manuscript version to present as a gift to Grand Master d'Aubusson. The illuminations are executed in the Burgundian style and have been attributed, by Theresa Vann, to the Master of the Cardinal of Bourbon.⁴⁰ Images of gatherings of the Order portray Hospitaller knights with recognizably different physiognomies suggesting these to be the first known portraits of contemporary knights (Fig. 38).⁴¹ This would have been possible had the artist succeeded in working side-by-side with Caoursin, who may have been the one to provide the descriptions of the individual knights' faces, particularly in the illumination titled 'Caoursin presenting his work to Grand Master d'Aubusson'. On the other hand, with respect to other seemingly informative aspects, such as the interiors of the Rhodes Palace of the Grand Master, as well as cartographic representations of the Siege of Rhodes, the artist may have adapted generic fifteenth-century images, or closely read the description within the text.

In a comparative study of the thirty-two illustrations of the manuscript and the nine woodcuts of the published volume, Vann has noted that the illustrations exhibit different purposes in relation to the narrative structure. Besides differences in composition, she concludes that:

'... the woodcut artist clearly communicated a story, while the master of the illuminations expected the reader to study the image and read the story within ... The illuminations were created for the perusal of one man, Pierre d'Aubusson. The ultimate intent was to please him; any assessment of their utility in conducting pictorial archaeology of weapons, buildings, and armour should keep that in mind. The woodcuts were created for a mass audience, to tell the story quickly and memorably. Both sets of illustrations were created under the control of the knights, who distorted their world for their own purposes.'⁴²

³⁹ Sire, *The Knights of Malta*, 55.

⁴⁰ Theresa M. Vann, advance excerpt from *Guillaume Caoursin's Description of the Siege of Rhodes, 1480*, Aldershot, forthcoming. I thank the author for kindly forwarding the excerpt.

⁴¹ Verbal communication by Pamela Willis, Curator of St John's Museum, London, in March 2011. The identification of individual knights is awaiting further study.

⁴² Vann, *Guillaume Caoursin's Description of the Siege of Rhodes*.

Vann has thus identified how Caoursin recognized that different audiences required different strategies each with their own visual language. The publication demanded a legible visual format, in the woodcut medium, in just enough detail to support the reading of Caoursin's text. On the other hand, the manuscript gift was a statement of magnificence and splendour through the numerous illuminations that decorated the text, which were intended to dazzle its sole reader, the Grand Master.

3.2.2 Tapestries

The second instance of decorative art were the tapestries that had been salvaged from the Palace of the Grand Masters in Rhodes and which were transported to Rome with the rest of the Order's belongings in 1523. At the turn of the sixteenth century, the magistral palace in Rhodes was decorated with sumptuous tapestries, known from accounts by historians of the Order. Tapestries were costly artefacts, requiring much labour and material to produce, and therefore proclaimed their owner's wealth and connections. The magistral tapestries portrayed themes on the Order's military history, meaning that they were commissioned tapestries probably made to the dimensions of the magistral palace's halls. They thus held political resonance and endowed the magistral palace with authoritative dignity. The Order's historian, Giacomo Bosio described the tapestries when listing the diverse instances of magistral munificence that had been expressed by Grand Master Pierre D'Aubusson (1476-1503), stating '*E le molte battaglie maritime, e terrestri, che nei ricchissimi panni arazzi da lui lasciati nel Magistral Palagio, e nella Chiesa, figurate si veggono, danno ad intendere all'intelletto e rappresentano á gli occhi la grandezza, e la maraviglia delle segnalate, e eroiche sue attioni*'.⁴³ Another set taken out of Rhodes were the twenty-one tapestries representing portraits of the Grand Masters who ruled before the Order's arrival in Malta. They were subsequently displayed inside the Conventual church in Valletta where they adorned the nave and aisles.⁴⁴ Neither set are known to survive. A third set of tapestries from Rhodes, were the ones in silk and wool commissioned from Flanders in 1493 by Grand Master Pierre d'Aubusson (1476-1503) showing scenes from the lives of St Catherine of Alexandria and St Mary Magdalene.⁴⁵ These tapestries were destroyed in the fire of 1532 that gutted the Order's first Conventual church in Malta, the church of St Lawrence in Birgu. Thus the tapestries that were brought to Malta from Rhodes reflect different pictorial themes. The woven images of the Order's military history, of its Grand Masters and of saints, reflect a concerted exercise in Renaissance self-fashioning of magistral identity through the art of tapestry. Such a use of the medium is comparable to the efforts made by Burgundian dukes to

⁴³ Translation: 'The many battles at sea and on land, that are represented in the rich tapestries left by [d'Aubusson] in the magistral palace and in the Conventual church, appeal to the intellect and demonstrate his grandeur and his marvellous heroic deeds'; G. Bosio, *Dell'Istoria ...* 2nd ed. Part I, Rome, 1621, 566.

⁴⁴ An eyewitness account in the first years of the seventeenth century described these tapestries as 'Oriental'; Emil Kraus, *The Adventures of Count George Albert of Erbach*, transl. by Beatrice Prince Henry of Battenburg, London, 1891, 137.

⁴⁵ Luttrell, 'The Rhodian Background', 14.

their political ends.⁴⁶ The dimensions of the tapestries ensured their high visibility amongst large groups of witnesses, guests to the magistral halls, who witnessed the expression of magnificence, magistral ideology, and Hospitaller piety that were communicated through the tapestries' imagery.

In the course of the Order's temporary sojourn in Viterbo in 1527, one outcome of the Sack of Rome by the soldiers of Charles V was the imprisonment of Antonio Milese, the Order's agent in Rome, and the confiscation of the set of Rhodes tapestries that were then stored inside the agent's house.⁴⁷ The tapestries held enough significance and value for negotiations for their ransom by the Grand Master's envoys. The tapestries were handed over, together with Milese, for a ransom of 700 scudi, paid for by Grand Master L'Isle Adam.⁴⁸ Besides the twenty-one portrait tapestries, the pictorial compositions of the remainder are unknown. In 1589, shortly after the theft in Rome, one tapestry bearing the arms of Grand Master Amaury d'Amboise (1503-1512) was sold in Barcelona (Fig. 39). It was bequeathed to the Barcelona Art Museums in 1866, and is now displayed in the *Museu Textil y de la Indumentaria*.⁴⁹ This tapestry was believed to depict an episode from the 1480 Siege of Rhodes. It has now been shown as portraying a naval battle between Turkish ships and those of the Order, in Rhodes, one of several that took place following the death of D'Aubusson in 1503, and the arrival of his successor D'Amboise from France in 1504.⁵⁰ It thus establishes D'Amboise as the patron who commissioned the set of tapestries on the Order's naval victories.

The subject of the tapestry and its armorial bearings, indicate a secular setting for the tapestry that, if it were one of a series, would imply its display within a hall intended for audiences for whom the naval battle and its victorious outcome would have held political significance. Such a pictorial programme was to be repeated in mural form, on the theme of the Siege of Malta of 1565, in the *Sala del Gran Consiglio* of the Grand Master's Palace in Valletta.

The Rhodes tapestries and the Caoursin woodcuts are two instances of art patronage by the Order of St John that are eloquent in their embodiment of Renaissance, and particularly Burgundian, values of magnificence and liberality at the turn of the sixteenth century. Furthermore the success of their reception can be extended to include the decisions by later Grand Masters in Malta to establish their own patronage of the arts in the same forms, that is, manuscripts, books (particularly on the history of the Order), tapestries (and their later

⁴⁶ Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, 104-114.

⁴⁷ Giacomo Bosio, *Istoria*, Vol III (Rome, 1602) pp. 53, 58, quoted in Giovanni Bonello, 'Knights in Slavery: *Captivi in manibus infidelium*', in *Histories of Malta Vol V: Reflections and Rejections*, Malta, 2004, 81.

⁴⁸ Instructions to envoys dated 9 June 1527: '*ve informaterete come sono passate le cose nostre maxime la tapezeria, quale, se fusse robata vedere de rescatare*', NLM, Cod. 412, f.250v, quoted in Luttrell, 'The Rhodian Background', 14 fn117.

⁴⁹ Robert L. Dauber, 'Re-identification of a Hospitaller tapestry and of the first pictorial representations of *Gran Navi of Rhodes*', in *Sacra Militia*, 9, Malta, 2010, 37-44.

⁵⁰ Bosio, *Istoria*, III (1602) 53, 58, quoted in Bonello, 'Knights in Slavery', 81.

adaptation into mural cycles in fresco), vestments, monstrances and choral books. Three Grand Masters stand out in particular for the manner and extent to which their patronage of art and art collecting became in turn the model for their magistral successors, thus influencing the growth of art collecting amongst Hospitaller knights. In this way, the Burgundian model of art patronage continued to be adopted, and adapted, by the Order until well into the seventeenth century. Subsequently, by the second half of the seventeenth century, Italian values in collections of paintings and sculptures, placing emphasis on the artist's singularity as well as on the work of art's subject matter and meaning, also started to appear among Hospitaller collectors.

3.3 Key magistral models in Hospitaller Malta

The art of architecture, particularly the design of military buildings such as fortifications and gateways, were also appropriately princely forms of splendour and magnificence that proclaimed the magistral patron's identity through the sculptural heraldic devices and trophies that would be placed on the respective building's doorway and walls.⁵¹ Artistic expressions of princely magnificence extended to the Grand Masters' funerary monuments, designed to demonstrate honour and dignity in an increasingly impressive array of sculptures in marble and bronze inside the Order's Conventual church.⁵² Other displays of spectacle and marvel were provided by the Grand Masters. One event was the *possesso*, the Grand Master's processional entry into Mdina (Fig. 40), the old capital of Malta where the nobility resided, signifying and symbolising his 'possession' of the Maltese Islands.⁵³ Another was the carnival *cuccagna*, a greasy pole laden with food that young men were meant to climb and gain their prize, to the entertainment of onlookers. Other forms of spectacle were more private, such as the Grand Master's meal that would also be watched by travellers and visitors to Malta. During Wignacourt's magistracy, his meals followed rigorous codes of behaviour making use of the finest plate and table decoration, with 60 knights in attendance. Visitors would help to propagate the

⁵¹ AOM 924, f.2: Wignacourt's testament included instructions on the maintenance of the five fortified towers that he had built on strategic points of the Maltese Islands and that he subsequently bequeathed to the Order, entrusting their maintenance to his successors and leaving explicit instructions on the maintenance of his coat-of-arms: '*Prohibendo espressamente che non si possino cavar sotta qualsivoglia artiglieria, armi, o altro destinati al servizio di essi nemmeno rimuovere l'insegno di nra famiglia, le ... consumato per il tempo, o per altra cagione rotto, si debbino, sub. rinnovare, senza poter in modo alcuno collocarvi armi di nostri successor o di altri*'. The Wignacourt arms were later to be defaced in the course of the French rule (1798-1800) and completely removed in the course of British rule (after 1800).

⁵² AOM 924, f.2: Wignacourt's testament included instructions relating to his tomb: '*Vogliamo che il nro Corpo sia seppellito nella nra Chiesa Conventuale di S. Gio. Batta, e nella Cappella delli Gran Mri in quel luogo, che sara' avisato dalli esecutori del nro present disproprium.to, che qui sotto dichiariamo con quella devotione, e con quel honore conveniente alla dignita nra in una tomba honorata da farsi dalli sud.i nri esecutori sopra il nro Quinto*'. Wignacourt's testamentary display of magnificence was also exercised in the largesse that he extended to various charitable foundations, endowments as well as in the liberation of his slaves.

⁵³ Cremona, 'Spectacle and 'Civil Liturgies'', 103-118.

grandeur of the magistral court by recounting descriptions of the Grand Master's repast, as in the diary kept by Count Erbach in the course of his visit to Valletta in 1621.⁵⁴

Following the Great Siege of 1565, the building of the new city of Valletta heralded a transformation in the Order's self-identity, in a clear departure from any aspect of monastic living. Sixteenth-century plans for the new city show the division of building plots with key sites allocated to the important buildings of the Order of St John.⁵⁵ The site where the Palace of the Grand Master stands was once occupied by the Auberge of the Italian langue and by private residences, one of which belonged to Eustachio di Monte, nephew of Grand Master Pietro del Monte (1568-1572). While staying with his nephew, Del Monte decided against the first plan of having his palace built at its original site as planned on the highest point of the new city. Instead he chose his nephew's residence as the site for the new magistral palace at the very centre of the city, surrounded by public squares on three sides (Fig. 41). Its location commands the vista along the city's main road, *Strada Reale*, spanning all the way up to *Porta Reale*, the gated entrance to the city at the very end of the street and down to Fort St Elmo, at the outermost tip of the peninsula.⁵⁶ The Palace thus became the new city's most significant landmark, together with its main gate, its main street, and its largest public square. The centrality of the Palace to the rest of the Valletta underscores Di Monte's decision to relocate the magistral residence away from the towering aloofness of the original site at the periphery, where the auberge of the langue of Castile was subsequently built, towards the heart of the young city. The new site thus can be seen to symbolise the Order's shift from its medieval identity as a Convent within the circumscribed *Collachio* towards the early modern identity which emanated from magistral court life.

3.3.1 *Grand Master Jean L'Evêque de la Cassière (1572-1581)*

The magistral palace combined the Grand Master's residential quarters with rooms for public functions. Over the years of its occupation by the Grand Masters of the Order, the Palace was embellished by the best artists and artisans in the land, with the most opulent furnishings that could be acquired from other cities in Europe and beyond. Grand Master L'Evêque de la Cassière was the first patron of a major art commission in Hospitaller Malta. Having built the Conventual Church out of his own purse, as well as the Palace *piano nobile*, he sought out artists in Rome to execute both religious and secular decorative programmes. News of the projects, or certainly, of the growing concentration of art patrons inside the new city, preceded the Grand Master's agents leading to one of Rome's more important artists, Matteo Perez d'Aleccio arriving in Malta before being sought out. This is known from the writing of the

⁵⁴ Kraus, *The Adventures of Count George Albert of Erbach*.

⁵⁵ Roger De Giorgio, *A City by an Order*, Malta, 1985, 90, 92, 153.

⁵⁶ Theresa Vella, 'Picturing the Piazza: A viewpoint on Valletta', *Treasures of Malta*, 17: 2, Easter 2011, 68-77.

Dutch artist-biographer Karel van Mander (1548-1606) who, in the course of his sojourn in Rome between 1574 and 1577, together with the French artist and engraver, Etienne Duperac (1525-1604), was making plans to travel to Malta having agreed to a contract with the Order.⁵⁷ However they were pipped to the post in 1576, when Perez d'Aleccio turned up in Malta after 'fleeing from Rome'.⁵⁸ Perez d'Aleccio was in Malta for five years, leaving behind some canvas paintings including the altarpiece inside St John's Conventual Church (Fig. 42), and his *magnum opus*, the fresco cycle of the Great Siege inside the Palace *Sala del Gran Consiglio* (Fig. 9). He received a glowing recommendation from Grand Master De La Cassière and left Malta in June 1581,⁵⁹ barely one week before the aging Grand Master was deposed by his own Order.

The frescoes depicting the Great Siege of 1565 embody one of the first major commissions in art granted by the Grand Master of the Order of St John in Malta in 1577. The mural cycle shows the main events of the Siege of Malta by the Turkish army between May and September of 1565, and recalls the victorious theme of the afore-mentioned tapestries of the Siege of Rhodes which used to hang in the magistral palace in Rhodes. The composition of the frescoes may also have recalled that of the Rhodes tapestries, with Turkish troops in the foreground, and the Order's territory in the middle- and back-ground, although this comparison can only be made with the single surviving tapestry.⁶⁰ While the fresco compositions are packed with human figures, the one looming presence is that of the island of Malta, at times depicted by means of cartographic convention, at times in the more narrative convention of landscape. With the events of the Great Siege superimposed over the representation of Maltese land, the fresco cycle permanently bonded this historic episode as the moment of legitimation of the Order's occupation and ownership of Malta. The overt inclusion of Turkish troops in the foreground tempered the glorious overtones of the fresco cycle, a reminder of the Order's loss of Rhodes that occurred 43 years earlier. The representation of Christian virtues at constant intervals

⁵⁷ The Roman artist is listed as 'Mattheo d'Aletzi' in Karel van Mander, *Het Schilder-boeck*, Antwerp, 1604, 193. Van Mander's description of Perez d'Aleccio within the chapter on 'Italian Painters presently active in Rome' (including Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio) indicates those Italian painters considered to be the most important in Van Mander's time. Marjolein Leesberg, 'Karel van Mander as a Painter', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 22:1/2, 1993-1994, 6.

⁵⁸ Van Mander, *Schilder-boeck*, 194. The archives of the Order indicate that Perez d'Aleccio arrived in Malta at the request of the Order. AOM *Liber Bullarum* f.273, entry dated 15 June 1581: '*facciamo piena et indubitata fede con il discreto Mattheo de Aleccio pittore l'Anno 1576 ad insidenza n[ost]ra venir da Roma in questa Isola dove si adhora che quivi estate ha fatto servitio n[ost]ro]o piu opera di pittura et particolarmente l'Ancova dell'Altare Maggiore et diversi quadri coloriti a olio nella N[ost]ra Chiesa di S. Gio Batta et in altre chiese.*' The life and works of Matteo Perez d'Aleccio await study by art historians.

⁵⁹ AOM 439, f.273. Perez d'Aleccio returned to Rome where he printed engravings of his Great Siege fresco compositions. The engraver he employed for this task was Pieter Perret (1555-1639); Christopher L.C.E. Witcombe, *Copyright in the Renaissance: prints and the privilege in Sixteenth-century Venice and Rome*, Leiden, 2004, 230-33.

⁶⁰ The tapestry is displayed in the *Museu Textil i d'Idumentaria*, Barcelona. Formerly titled 'The Siege of Rhodes 1480', the tapestry has recently been proposed as a representation of 'The Arrival of Grand Master Emery d'Amboise in Rhodes with a relief naval squadron in September 1504'; Dauber, 'Re-identification of a Hospitaller Tapestry', 37-44.

between the frescoes buttressed the moral legitimacy of the Order's appropriation of Malta.⁶¹ The choice of theme may have also been prompted by the Grand Master's need to rein in his Knights. As with the success of the Siege of Rhodes in 1480, the success of the Siege of Malta of 1565 also drew 'mettlesome young noblemen' to the Order in overwhelming numbers.⁶² La Cassière's attempts to enforce traditional discipline led to his ousting by rebellious knights. After quelling the revolt with the Pope's help La Cassière died in Rome. He was however the patron for a monumental work of art which shaped and sustained Hospitaller identity as one steeped in historic geography.

3.3.2 *Grand Master Hugues Loubenx de Verdalle (1582-1595)*

Verdalle was the first Grand Master to understand fully the interplay between the communicative potential of the visual arts and their means for shaping a political vision, as well as to effectively combine artistic, religious and architectural apparatus to revitalise the Hospitaller Order's identity. Verdalle initiated a series of measures which strengthened the public persona of the Grand Master and subsequently brought a much-needed stability to the Order. Verdalle had been elected Grand Master in the wake of the 1581 rebellion of the Knights against his predecessor, de La Cassière, an attempted coup that had been stemmed in Rome by the Pope with an outcome that strengthened the absolute authority of the Grand Master, yet conversely established the latter's political dependency on Papal support.⁶³ Verdalle's alignment with papal authority was rewarded with his elevation to Cardinal in December 1587, which therefore conferred great prestige on the position of the Grand Master, rendering it comparable to that of a Prince within the nascent absolutist monarchies of sixteenth-century Europe. Verdalle harnessed the power of art to give visual expression to the centrality of the Grand Master's office, by placing his own achievements and rank as a personification of magistral authority (Fig. 43). In doing so, he was the first Grand Master to succeed in giving a modern 'face' to the Order of St John through a consistent use of biographical imagery in forms that were seen and comprehended by Hospitaller knights in Malta, as well as by those in commanderies and priorates, and by other potentates in European courts.

In Malta, by the 1580s, the French Grand Master, Hugues Loubenx de Verdalle was possibly emulating Valois practice when he extended the *piano nobile* on the east elevation of the magistral palace to build a new series of chambers and ante-chambers, which included his summer bedroom and a private chapel (Fig. 44).⁶⁴ The route to the summer wing provided the

⁶¹ Theresa Vella, 'The Visual Representation of Land in European Societies between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: An introduction to the Modern preoccupation with Land' (unpublished master's dissertation, University of Malta, 1999), 75.

⁶² Sire, *The Knights of Malta*, 74

⁶³ Carmel Cassar, 'Justices and Injustices: the Order of St John, the Holy See, and the Appeals Tribunal in Rome', *History and Anthropology*, 19: 4, 2008, 312-3.

⁶⁴ Chatenet, 'The King's Space', 205. Also, refer Chapter I, 'The Valois Court in France'.

setting for the display of works of art and other collections, indirectly denoting magistral wealth and erudition to observant visitors such as ambassadors and other guests. Verdalle may thus have been the first Grand Master to create a gallery or sequence of halls that was intended for the display of a collection. Amongst Verdalle's collection were a number of archaeological sculptures, low relief portraits in profile, of female personages from Classical Roman history.⁶⁵ His collection of paintings included easel works by the Tuscan artist, Filippo Paladini (1544-1614), who executed the altarpiece Our Lady with Saints John the Baptist and Paul, and Knights,⁶⁶ for the new magistral chapel (Fig. 45), as well as an oval bust portrait of Verdalle in cardinal's robes,⁶⁷ a painting of the Ascension,⁶⁸ and a devotional painting of his namesake, St Ugo.⁶⁹

Verdalle also built a country palace in Boschetto, ostensibly for his and his guests' enjoyment of hunting in the nearby wooded area, although its fortified appearance suggests the Grand Master prepared for the eventuality of a revolt (Fig. 46). Filippo Paladini was also engaged for the execution of fresco paintings on two walls inside the Main Hall and on the ceiling of the Entrance Hall (Fig. 47). The murals inside the Main Hall depict episodes from the life of Verdalle, from the time of his entry into the Order as a young page to the time of his receiving the Cardinal's hat from the Pope in 1587 (Fig. 48). Such a biographical cycle of paintings has no immediate precedent within the Order's pictorial history and calls for further study. Nor does it seem that the mural cycle has any specific precedent in other European cities, insofar that the cycle represents a series of key episodes in the life of an individual who is given the prominence of history painting.⁷⁰ Such a series may be compared to funerary paintings which portrayed episodes from the life of the deceased, yet which are known mainly from accounts, as they would be destroyed with other related ephemera.⁷¹ Possibly, some comparison can be made with the Room of Farnese depictions inside the Farnese Palace at Caprarola, executed between 1562 and 1563, but even these episodes are singularly displayed, unlike the Paladini

⁶⁵ The Grand Master's Palace was described by the German visitor, Michael Heberer von Bretten, who was in Malta in 1588. Thomas Freller, *The Life and Adventures of Michael Heberer von Bretten*, Malta, 1997.

⁶⁶ The painting is signed and dated 1589. M.G. Paolini and D. Bernini, *Filippo Paladini*, Exhibition catalogue, Palermo, 1967, 25. During the British period, the painting was removed from the Palace and given to the Archbishop of Malta.

⁶⁷ This information is supported by the paintings' original location inside the Palace, before their transfer to the National Museum. H.P. Scicluna, *The church of St John in Valletta*, Malta, 1955, catalogue no. 225. The portrait served as the prototype for other images of Verdalle; Toffolo, *Image of a Knight*, 26. A marble bust of Verdalle in the Palace collection is also derived from this painting.

⁶⁸ CAM, *Disproprietà* Vol 1, *Spoglio Verdala* f.8: 'Un quadretto dell'Ascensione che ha avuta da Fra Fran.co Le merle armarien che era del Ill.mo Cardinale il Gran Maestro'.

⁶⁹ Bosio, *Imagini*, 63-64.

⁷⁰ Eve Borsook points out that before 1550, history paintings concerned with the life and achievements of an individual who was not a saint were rare in Italy. After 1560, dynastic cycles begin to appear, such as Tintoretto's for the Gonzaga at Mantua and Zuccari's for the Farnese at Caprarola. But none of these were really biographical in the sense that they illustrated the lives of their subjects from the cradle to the grave. E. Borsook, 'Art and Politics at the Medici Court III: Funeral Decor for Philip II of Spain', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 14:1, June 1969, 92.

⁷¹ The earliest works in this genre were those painted for the funerals, in 1564 and 1587, of Michelangelo and Francesco I. None of these pictures survive. Paladini was in Malta at the time of Francesco I's death. Borsook, 'Art and Politics', 92.

compositions which are clustered in a way to be viewed sequentially. Prior to the Caprarola murals, such cycles would be dedicated to the lives of saints, or biblical narratives. The relative originality of the pictorial biography as a form of mural art implies that Verdalle was keen to harness the inventions of contemporary art, thereby linking his patronage with contemporary developments in Florence.

Verdalle's artistic patronage also extended to the art of engraving, including the illustrations which accompanied the publication of the Statutes of the Order.⁷² The illustrations were commissioned in the 1580s from Giuseppe Cesari (1568-1640), later Cavalier d'Arpino, and numbered some twenty in all, corresponding to the twenty chapters of the Rule of the Order. The attribution to Cesari has not been known for long, and is based on the recent discovery of one autograph drawing in the collection of St John's Museum in Clerkenwell.⁷³ They were subsequently engraved by the Frenchman Philippe Thomassin (1562-1622), better known as the teacher of Jacques Callot. Thomassin also designed and engraved the thirteen portraits of the Order's Grand Masters which were included with later editions of the *Statuta*, signing each plate *Phil Thom gall. fec.* Most of the illustrations are in the Mannerist style, and show Cesari's masterly treatment of the human figure, although the spatial articulation of the landscape elements also reveals the artist's uncertain handling of perspective. Two illustrations are specific to Malta, namely the illustration showing a procession of Hospitaller knights entering the Conventual church, and the dedicatory page which is based on the Paladini fresco painting of an episode in the life of Grand Master Verdalle - the Pope's bestowal of Verdalle's cardinal hat in 1587 (Fig. 49). Giuseppe Cesari is not known to have been in Malta, and may therefore have worked from drawings that were prepared for the purpose. Such a commission is indicative of Verdalle's awareness of the power of the published text and image in spreading the fame of the Order, possibly hoping to repeat the success of Caoursin's *Obsidionis*. It is also indicative of the Order's powerful network in Roman circles, shown by Verdalle's success in engaging the services of a young artist whose talent was already recognized and whose works were widely sought in Rome.⁷⁴

Verdalle also harnessed the power of the visual image to evoke the Order's 'ancestral' saints and *beati*,⁷⁵ establishing an imagined lineage that was based on piety and hospitaller tradition,

⁷² Verdalle, *Statuta Hospitalis Hierusalem* (1588)

⁷³ Giovanni Bonello, 'The Cavalier d'Arpino and the Statutes of Grand Master Verdalle', in *Histories of Malta VIII: Mysteries and Myths*, Malta, 2007, 75-87.

⁷⁴ At the time of the commission, Cesari was engaged on the decoration of the Roman palace of the powerful cardinal, Giulio Antonio Santorio, who was also the protector of a Maltese scholar and intellectual based in Rome, Leonardo Abela. The Maltese scholar enjoyed the favour of Grand Master Verdalle, who feted him with great honour inside the Magistral Palace. Bonello, 'The Cavalier d'Arpino', 'Leonardo Abela: A forgotten Intellectual of the Cinquecento', in *Histories of Malta VIII: Mysteries and Myths*, Malta, 2007, 60-74, 80; Bonello quotes AOM 292.

⁷⁵ The holy predecessors were the founder of the Order, Blessed Gerard (d. 1113), his successor the Blessed Raymond Dupuy (d. 1160), St Gherlac of Houtheim (1100-1172), St Nicasius (d. 1187), St Ubaldesca (1136-1206), St Ugo (1186-1233), the Blessed Gerard Mecatti (1174-1245), the Blessed Peter of Imola (1250-1320), the

and underpinned by the noble genealogy of its Hospitaller knights.⁷⁶ Verdalle's innovation may have been born from a contemporary interest in archaeology, particularly excavations in burial sites where early Christian martyrs were buried, and their remains, transformed into relics, as material evidence of history.⁷⁷ His bequest included six books, one of which was on Roman antiquities, *L'Antichità di Roma*.⁷⁸ In engaging Giacomo Bosio to write the history of the Order of St John, Verdalle was commissioning a relative of the first archaeologist of Christian Roman sites, Antonio Bosio (1575-1629), the Maltese-born author of *Roma Sotteranea* (1632).⁷⁹ The Grand Master specified the need to include descriptions of the Order's saints and *beati*, with illustrations, one of which was to be derived from a devotional painting that belonged to him, that of *St Ugo* (the Grand Master's namesake), and that was kept in the private chapel of the magistral palace. This painting is one of the earliest indications of a pictorial representation of the Order's saints in a Hospitaller collection.

The painting was mentioned by Giacomo Bosio, who recounted how the Grand Master sent the painting to the Order's historian in Rome where he was drafting the 1594 History of the Order.⁸⁰ Bosio described how the Grand Master had the express wish to see an engraving derived from this painting, as an illustration in the *Istoria*. Verdalle's interest in devotion to the Order's saints may have been triggered by the Council of Trent (1545-1563), as a measure to establish the religious foundations of the Order in response to the presence in Malta (and elsewhere), of other religious orders which also sought to attract novices from the noble families.⁸¹ Other measures taken by Verdalle to strengthen the Order's devotion to its own saints was his successful request to Pope Sixtus V (1585-1590) for permission to bring holy relics of St Ubaldesca to Malta,

Blessed Gherland (1271), the Blessed Garcia Martinez (d.1286), Sta Toscana (1280-1343), St Fleur (1300-1347), the Blessed Nonius Alvarez Pereira (1360-1431), the Blessed David Fortescue (1480-1539) and the Blessed David Gunston (d.1541).

⁷⁶ Richard Rex, 'Blessed Adrian Fortescue – A Martyr without a Cause?', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 115, 1997, 307-353. I thank Giovanni Bonello for drawing my attention to this essay.

⁷⁷ On Verdalle's return from Rome to Malta in 1588, he stopped in Messina and ordered the restoration of the church of the Order of St John; celebrations were held on the discovery of the interred bodies of the martyr saints Placido, Antichio, Vittorino and their sister Flavia Vergine; AOM235, *Trattato della Maggio chiesa Conventuale di S. Gio / opera del Comend.re fra Gio Dom.co Manso*, 1698, 18.

⁷⁸ CAM Sentenze Vol. 1, *Spoglio Verdala*, f.8: '*L'antichità di Roma*'. This book, together with '*L'ordinatione capitulari dall'anno 1588 / li stationi delle chiesi di Roma / Trattato della frequentazione della Sacra Communion / L'ufficio della Settimana Santa / ritratto della vita della Madonna*', were bequeathed by the Grand Master to Fra Domingo Garcia.

⁷⁹ *Roma Sotterranea, opera postuma di Antonio Bosio Romano, antiquario ecclesiastico singolare de' suoi tempi. Compita, disposta, et accresciuta dal M. R. P. Giovanni Severani da S. Severino*, Rome, 1632.

⁸⁰ '*Un Ritratto al natural del medesimo Sant'Ugo, già molti anni sono, mi fu mandata in dono, fin da Malta; dall'Eminentissimo, e Reverendissimo Cardinale Frat'Ugo de Loubenx Verdala, Gran Maestro dell'istessa Sacra Religione ...; ch'avvenga, che gli fosse carissimo, e lo tenesse appo' se', nell'istessa camera sua con divotione grandissima; essendo Imagine antica, e come si tien per fermo, cavata dal natural e del vivo di quell Santo del suo nome, e della sua propria Religione; el esse no di meno di privarsi de quell suo spiritual gusto, e di qualle sua divota consolation, per mandarmelo; affine che vacandone un disegno, lo facessi intagliar in rame, e poi stampare nell'Istoria della sua Religione, come in effetto ho' fatto, nella Prima parte di essa [1594]*'. Bosio, *Imagini*, 63-64.

⁸¹ The Jesuits were in Malta by 1591 with the establishment of a Jesuit Church and Jesuit College, the *Collegium Melitense*, in Valletta, yet were already recruiting Maltese novices as early as 1557. Stanley Fiorini, 'Malta in 1530', in *Hospitaller Malta*, 140, fn.95. The Dominican Order was in Malta by 1450, and set up a house in Valletta in 1569. Their church was elevated to the status of parish church in 1571.

where they were subsequently kept with other relics of the Order inside the Conventual church (Fig. 51).⁸²

3.3.3 Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt (1601-1622)

Devotion to the Order's saints and blessed, was further encouraged during the magistracy of Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt (1601-1622), through the visual medium of portraits, with the building in 1604 of the Oratory of San Giovanni *Decollato* (Fig. 53), intended for the religious instruction of Hospitaller novices. A series of paintings of Saints and Blessed of the Order was displayed within the new annex to the Conventual Church. Some of the portraits were subsequently to provide the original composition for the engravings published in Giacomo Bosio's 1633, *Le Imagini de' Beati, e Santi della Sacra Religione di S. Gio. Gerosolimitano*,⁸³ supplemented by an account of the Saints' lives (Fig. 520, Fig. 52). This is confirmed by Bosio in his description of the engraving of Blessed Fra Don Garcia Martinez, wherein he attests that the illustrated portrait is similar to the one displayed inside the Oratory, amongst other paintings of the Order's saints and blessed.⁸⁴ Bosio's claim to the veracity of the engraved image harks back to the standard established by Paolo Giovio (1483-1552), in his internationally famous collection of four hundred portraits, wherein the sitters' likenesses were derived 'from the originals; [Giovio gave] the necessary evidence by describing what each one had been copied from, so that anyone who wants confirmation can go to see them for himself'.⁸⁵ In 1575 and 1577, Giovio's collection of portraits were published posthumously,⁸⁶ together with the eulogies that he had earlier published without illustrations.⁸⁷ This too was mirrored in the history of Bosio's eulogies, as the Lives of the Order's saints and *beati*, had already been published as part of Bosio's 1629 edition of *Istoria*.⁸⁸

Bosio's book of engraved portraits, set the seal on harnessing the collective significance of the Order's saints and *beati* through the visual medium of portrait engravings. As a publication intended for widespread circulation, such a book would have formalised the Order's standing within the Counter-Reformation effort to promote the cult of saints. Bosio's publication of the

⁸² Del Pozzo, *Historia della Sacra Religione*, 275.

⁸³ Giacomo Bosio, *Le Imagini de' Beati, e Santi della Sacra Religione di S. Gio. Gerosolimitano. E di altre persone illustri. Con un brevissimo compendio della Vita, e de' miracoli loro. Cavato dalla prima, e seconda parte dell' Istorie della medesima Sacra Religione*, Palermo, 1633. A similar publication at the same time was F. Truglio's, *Le imagini de' Beati, e Santi della Sacra Religion*, also published in Palermo in 1633, that included an engraving of the Blessed Gerard reproduced from a painting that formed part of the series once on display inside the Oratory of St John's; Stone, 'The Context of Caravaggio's Beheading of St John', 159.

⁸⁴ 'La cui Imagine, hoggidi' sta' dipinta nell' Oratorio di San Giovanni Decollato, dell' inuita Citta' Valetta di Malta; fra' gli altri Beati, e Santi della sudetta sacra Religione, & illustrissima Militia. Ed e' in tutto simile a questo, che qui di sopra impresso si vede.' Bosio, *Imagini*, 101.

⁸⁵ Linda Klinger, *The Portrait Collection of Paolo Giovio* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Princeton University, vol.1, 1991, 157), quoted in Francis Haskell, *History and its Images*, New Haven, 1993, 43-48.

⁸⁶ Paolo Giovio, *Elogio Virorum bellica virtute illustrium*, Basle, 1575-77, quoted in Haskell, *History*, 48-50.

⁸⁷ Klinger, *The Portrait Collection of Paolo Giovio*, 205-8, quoted in Haskell, *History*, 43-48.

⁸⁸ Giacomo Bosio, *Dell' Istoria della sacra religione et illustrissima militia di San Giovanni Gerosolimitano*, Rome, 1594, 2nd ed. 1629.

engraved portraits may have also been intended to standardise the iconography of the Order's saints, thus providing valuable guidelines to Hospitaller art patrons who may have wished to commission paintings of saints, for devotional reasons.⁸⁹ With respect to the portrait of St Ubaldesca, Bosio went so far as to publish two engravings - the *Imagine moderna di Santa Ubaldesca* on the page facing *L'Imagine antica di Santa Ubaldesca* (Fig. 51) - suggesting that the Order could 'update' the saint's respective attributes. This detail underlines the publication's purpose to position the Order within the Counter-Reformation's harnessing of art as devotional tool, possibly in response to the growing strength of other religious Orders such as the Jesuits.

In the late 1680s, when the Oratory was refurbished in the high Baroque style according to the designs of Fra Mattia Preti, the full-length portraits of saints and blessed were dispersed,⁹⁰ although full-sized copies are found in the College of Conventual Chaplains in Rabat, Malta, where they can still be seen.⁹¹ Preti kept the theme of Saints of the Order as part of the Oratory's decorative programme, with portraits in oil on canvas, to his design, though his studio hands may have assisted with most of them. Earlier, between 1662 and 1666, Mattia Preti had executed a different series of paintings of saints and blessed of the Order, together with Hospitaller heroes from the Great Siege,⁹² as part of the redecoration of the Conventual church, entrusted to him by Grand Master Rafael Cotoner.⁹³ The portraits, executed in oil on stone, bear no relation to the late sixteenth-century paintings inside the sacristy (see below) other than the respective saints' attributes, and comprise an invention of the artist, seemingly based on the position of the *Ignudi* as a compositional device established by Michelangelo inside the Sistine Chapel.

Another series of portraits of Saints of the Order was executed in Spain. When a copy of the portrait of St Adrian Fortescue was required, following his elevation to 'Blessed' in 1621, an artist was sent to Spain to execute it from an original that was reputedly kept in the English College of St George in Madrid.⁹⁴ Another two series of paintings of Saints of the Order are

⁸⁹ Two inventories from Spanish *dispropiamenti* include entire sets of paintings of saints of the Order: AOM 931 (4) No. 9, f.106, Fra Don Manuel Arias (on becoming Archbishop of Seville in 1702), '*Cuerpos Entero de los santos de la Relixion de San Juan*', and AOM 931 (4) No. 10, f.129v, Fra Pietro Davalos Maca y Rocamora (died 1703) '*quadros de ... Santos ... Dio de dicha Religion*'. No other inventories were seen to include images of saints or blessed of the Order.

⁹⁰ Stone, 'The Context of Caravaggio's *Beheading of St John*', 159.

⁹¹ The paintings present an interesting conflation of baroque patronage and the counter-reformation interests of the Order, mediated through pictorial art. They await scholarly attention.

⁹² The rest of the figures depicted by Mattia Preti as part of the ceiling decoration of the Conventual Church represent Leone Strozzi, Alain de Montal, Pierre de Masseus, P. De Poliese, C. Alerano Parpaglia, A. Pegullo, Adriano de la Riviera, Alessandro Sangiorgio, Vespasiano Malaspina, Melchio de Monserrat, Juan d'Eguaras: Spike, *Preti: Catalogue Raisonné*, 315-6. The inclusion of these personages within the seventeenth-century pictorial programme awaits further study.

⁹³ AOM 260, *Liber Conciliorum Status 1657-64*, f.106v: '1661, Settembre 15, Valletta: *Il Gran Maestro Raffaell Cotoner informa il Venerabile Concilio dell'Ordine di San Giovanni della proposta di Mattia Preti di dipingere e dorare a spese proprie la volta della Chiesa Conventuale di San Giovanni*', quoted in Spike, *Preti: the collected documents*, 142.

⁹⁴ [Albert E. Abela], 'Blessed Adrian Fortescue, Knight of Malta', *The Sunday Times [of Malta]* 15 June 1986, 22. On 6 September 1621 a licence was issued in Madrid to Dr Vidal Vitale on behalf of the Order, granting him a

found in inventories of Spanish Hospitaller knights. Fra Don Manuel Arias had eight full-length paintings mentioned in his *spoglio*,⁹⁵ while Fra Pietro Davalos Maca y Rocamora (d.1703) owned twelve.⁹⁶ One other series known in Malta is made up of nine portraits of varying quality and dates to the early seventeenth century. At present, the series can be seen inside the Sacristy of the Conventual church of St John.

Similar to Verdalle before him, Wignacourt was well-versed in the uses of art for its communicative values, and he crafted his public image through the apparatus of portraiture, costume and collecting. In 1604, within three years of his election, Wignacourt set up the Armoury of the Order forming part of the magistral palace thus bringing together the Order's dispersed stores of suits of armour and weapons (Fig. 54). By transferring the *Armeria Pubblica* to the Palace, Wignacourt endowed the formerly prosaic stock with the character of a showpiece that reflected the military power and glory of the Order.⁹⁷ The Armoury became a 'renowned local attraction, capturing the attention and imagination of many a distinguished visitor to Malta ... [becoming] an instrument of propaganda exalting the Order's heroic past and the Knights' military role as the shield of Christendom.'⁹⁸ Wignacourt's interest in armour as a collection may have been triggered by the renowned collections held by other European sovereigns, such as those assembled by Charles VIII of France, Charles V of Spain and Archduke Ferdinand.⁹⁹ Yet already by the mid-sixteenth century, Fra Sabba da Castiglione had identified arms as objects worthy of collecting by a Hospitaller knight. This advice was adopted by several knights, with the result that a large number of these types of collections passed from private ownership into the Order's holding through the *dispropriamento* (the dispossession and dispersal of belongings at the death of a knight), thus augmenting the Order's own armoury. One such collection belonged to Fra Ottavio Tancredi (d.1719), who had various pieces displayed on the walls of a dedicated room, '*la Saletta denominata l'Armeria*', which he personally bequeathed to Grand Master Perellos.¹⁰⁰ Wignacourt's transfer of the Armoury to the Palace therefore signifies another turning point in the history of Hospitaller art patronage

certified description of the portrait ('*retrato*') of 'Beato Fr. Adriano Fortescudo' in that city. The author does not give his sources.

⁹⁵ AOM 931 (4) No. 9, f.106: Fra Don Manuel Arias, '*Cuerpos Entero de los santos de la Relixion de San Juan*'. The *spoglio* was compiled on the occasion of Arias' accession to the Archbishopric of Seville in 1702, and listed 83 paintings including portraits, landscapes as well as devotional paintings.

⁹⁶ AOM 931 (4) No. 10, f.129v: Fra Pietro Davalos Maca y Rocamora, d.1703, Valencia: '*Quince quadros de diferentes pinturas, y vetratos de Santos lo sierves de Dios de dicha Religion, y del Padre Maestro Alegre del Orden de Santo Domingo, Nuestra Señora del Pie de la Cruz, y otro quadro de la Cruz de diferentes grandaxiar sin guarnicion*'. Rocamora's inventory included 39 paintings including landscapes and a portrait of Pius V, besides devotional paintings.

⁹⁷ Stephen C. Spiteri, *The Palace Armoury: A Study of a Military Storehouse of the Knights of the Order of St John*, Malta, 1999, 65.

⁹⁸ Spiteri, *Palace Armoury*, 65.

⁹⁹ Spiteri, *Palace Armoury*, 66.

¹⁰⁰ AOM 931 (35) No. 16, f.110: '*All'odierno Em.mo Gran Maestro per pegno dell'antica amicizia ch mi sono sempre onorato di professargli, e della stima somma, che ho conservata sempre verso il suo merito, lascio tutti l'armi, tutti gli atrezzi e tutti i mobili che si conserva nella Saletta denominata l'Armeria, tanto sospesi nei pareti, come conservati negli Armarij secondo l'inventario che si trova fatta a parte.*'

and collecting, by assigning a new significance to arms and armour as collectibles, at a time when their importance in warfare was diminishing.

The evocative quality of suits of armour held a symbolic meaning that could resonate in portraiture, a quality that Wignacourt understood well through his own fascination with armour, and which he applied to his own portraits, as an innovation on those of his predecessors. Contemporary accounts describe how Knights would point out the suits of armour worn by Grand Masters in battle, on display next to their portraits.¹⁰¹ The evocative effect of the suit of armour as relic would be fortified by its proximity to the pictorial representation of the same suit of armour within a portrait, and points to the crafting of a cult for the Order's heroic personalities, namely Grand Masters d'Aubusson, L'Isle Adam, and de Vallette.¹⁰² Wignacourt commissioned his own portrait wearing the showpiece suit of armour that he had ordered from Genoa in 1601 (Fig. 55). The full-length painting was prominently displayed inside the Armoury, where his suit of armour was also kept, thus grafting Wignacourt's public persona to the relic/painting combinative effect of the older suits of armour and the heroic virtues of the Grand Master's predecessors.¹⁰³ Wignacourt was also known to go about his daily business partially clad in armour, even in times of peace, suggesting the Grand Master's conscious application of the symbolic uses of armour.¹⁰⁴ Caravaggio too depicted Wignacourt in a suit of armour that had been worn during the Great Siege of 1565 (Fig. 56). The decorative *alla Pisana* style of the suit of armour in the Caravaggio portrait was less impressive than the one acquired by Wignacourt shortly after his election in 1601, yet its stylistic anachronism held far greater resonance through its historic links with the Order's recent heroic past.¹⁰⁵ This effect was evoked by a few other sitters in later portraits, showing the same suit of armour worn by the Order's Grand Commander Jean Jacques de Verdellin in the seventeenth century and by Grand Master Emanuel Pinto de Fonseca in the eighteenth century.

The role of portraiture as political apparatus in Renaissance courts is a familiar model in the context of dynastic rule and has its roots in antiquity, originating from the Classical Roman model of the cult of ancestors. Even though the magistracy of the Order of St John was an elective one, not a dynastic or inherited one, portraiture was put to a comparable political use. During Wignacourt's rule, portraits of Grand Masters were displayed within the public spaces of

¹⁰¹ Kraus, *The Adventures of Count George Albert of Erbach*, 89.

¹⁰² These portraits have not been identified amongst works in the national art collection of Malta and may have been dispersed in the nineteenth century.

¹⁰³ The painting has received scholarly attention, having been attributed to Caravaggio and more recently to Leonello Spada, however it has since been de-attributed. For an outline of its various attributions, refer John Gash, 'Malta: Caravaggesque Crossroads', in *Caravaggio and paintings of realism in Malta*, ed. by Cynthia Degiorgio and Keith Sciberras, Malta, 2007, 104. Gash here also compares details in the portrait to elements in a painting by Mario Minniti, *Miracle of the Widow of Nain* (Museo Regionale, Messina), indicating that the Sicilian artist may have executed the portrait. The painting is on display inside the National Museum of Fine Arts of Malta, Inv. No. 199.

¹⁰⁴ Kraus, *The Adventures of Count George Albert of Erbach*, 110.

¹⁰⁵ David Stone and Keith Sciberras, *Caravaggio: Art, Knighthood and Malta*, Malta, 2006, 75-79.

the magistral palace, amongst other portraits of European royal figures and popes. These are mentioned in seventeenth-century visitors' accounts, such as that of the Count of Erbach in 1617,¹⁰⁶ and that of the Russian ambassador, Petr Tolstoy in 1698.¹⁰⁷ The accounts suggest that the display of magistral portraits were intended as part of the ceremonial arrangements for the benefit of visitors to the Palace, as they walked in through the palace corridors before arriving at the Grand Master's chambers.

Wignacourt's *spoglio* can be ranked as one of the most opulent by magistral standards. He bequeathed to the magistral estate his wall hangings of red damask that embellished three rooms inside the Palace, twenty-four chairs in red velvet with gold trimmings similar to the ones on the wall hangings, and matching canopy, as well as green damask wall hangings with another canopy and twelve chairs in velvet, and red damask wall hangings and canopy in two other rooms.¹⁰⁸ He also left an illuminated antiphonary choral book that bears the Wignacourt coat-of-arms to the magistral chapel.¹⁰⁹ Surprisingly, Wignacourt's testament does not include any mention of paintings, although he had acted as patron of Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, Leonello Spada,¹¹⁰ the latter having been engaged on the further embellishment of the Palace between 1609 and 1610, as well as other lesser known artists in Malta, such as Giulio Cassarino, besides others as yet unknown and attested to by his relatively numerous portraits. Of the easel paintings that were acquired by Wignacourt during his magistracy, a few may be pieced together from diverse contemporary sources: Caravaggio painted the Portrait of the Grand Master with one of his pages,¹¹¹ while according to Bellori, another painting, Salome receiving the head of the Baptist, was sent to Wignacourt by Caravaggio as a gift to placate the Grand Master after the knighted artist had fled Malta.¹¹² A third painting by Caravaggio was the as yet untraced oval

¹⁰⁶ Kraus, *The Adventures of Count George Albert of Erbach*.

¹⁰⁷ Max J. Okenfuss (transl.) *Petr Andreevitch Tolstoy: a Muscovite in early modern Europe*, N. Illinois, 1987.

¹⁰⁸ AOM 924 'A' f.2v: *Di più dichiariamo che le tre gran Cammeri di Tappezeria di Damsci rossi guarnito con frangie e passamani d'oro con Quattro portiere, ventiquattro seggi di velluto rosso con fangie d'oro nell'istesso modo, et con un baldacchino che accompagna restino allo stato del Magistero, et così anco la tappezzeria verde di Damasco con sui Padiglioni e fornimenti con dodici seggi di velluti et Quattro portiere e con l'altro due camera di Damasco rosso con lo zagarello, con dui portiere dell'istessi, e con suo baldacchino.*

¹⁰⁹ AOM Libr Ms 512; The Wignacourt choral book is smaller than the choral books that were commissioned for the Conventual church, suggesting that the former was intended to be viewed at a shorter distance, as in the magistral chapel. Irene Muscat, *Liturgical Books and Manuscripts Of the Order of St John located in the Archives at the National Library, Valletta, Malta* (unpublished undergraduate dissertation, University of Malta, 2006, 87).

¹¹⁰ According to Malvasia, Leonello Spada executed a portrait of Grand Master Wignacourt, for which he was rewarded with a neck chain (*vi comparse ... [con] collana al collo, che dicea donatagli da quel gran maestro [Wignacourt] per avergli fatto anch'egli il ritratto*); Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice, vite de' pittori bolognesi*, II, Bologna, 1678, 106. Also, Spada executed several paintings in Malta (*'mostrava patenti di quell'Eminentiss. che lo dichiarava suo familiare, e virtuoso trattenuto; sonetti stampati in sua lode per varie op[er]e dipinte in quell'Isola'*) however none have been identified, other than the frescoes that he executed inside three halls of the Palace of the Grand Master.

¹¹¹ This painting was transferred from the Palace at some as yet unknown point during, or after, Wignacourt's magistracy, surfacing in a private art collection in Paris in 1644; *Diary and correspondence of John Evelyn, F.R.S.*, I, London, 1862, 60: in the diary entry for 1 March 1644, '... in the Hall [of the Palace of the Count de Liancourt], a Cavaliero di Malta, attended by his page, said to be of Michael Angelo'. The portrait was subsequently sold to Louis XIV. For a full bibliography on the painting, ref. John T. Spike, *Catalogue raisonnée of the paintings by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio* 2nd ed., London, 2010, 253-57.

¹¹² '...e cercando insieme di placare il Gran Maestro [Caravaggio] gli mando in dono una mezza figura di Herodiade con la testa di San giovanni nel bacino', Gio Pietro Bellori, *Le vite dei pittori ...*, Rome, 1672, 211, quoted in

Portrait of Wignacourt that was given by the Grand Master to his trusted Secretary, Francesco dell'Antella in 1612.¹¹³ Another masterpiece, Christ carrying the Cross, by Guido Reni (Fig. 57), was probably in the magistral palace by 1621, and may have been commissioned by Wignacourt.¹¹⁴ Several other portraits of Wignacourt, executed to varying degrees of competence, are still extant in Malta. Most of the paintings depict Wignacourt in armour, while only one depicts him in the magistral robes.¹¹⁵

Belying the absence of paintings from Wignacourt's *spoglio* is that from the first years of his magistracy, Wignacourt sought out artists in Italy, in attempts to attract a famous name to his court in Malta.¹¹⁶ Attracting artists who were highly regarded in their time could only be achieved through the involvement of an advisor within the ranks of the Order, who had the authority and ability to find the artists and to seek their agreement. The name of one such art advisor, Fra Francesco dell'Antella (1567-1624), has surfaced in the history of the relationship between Caravaggio, Wignacourt and the Order of St John in the first decade of the seventeenth century.¹¹⁷

3.3.4 Grand Master Ramon Perellos y Roccaful (1697-1720)

Almost a century later, a remarkable art commission for the magistral palace was exercised through a similar network of connections, founded on Grand Master Perellos y Roccaful's trust in the connoisseurship of his diplomat at the French Court, Fra Balì Jean-Jacques de Mesmes

Giovanni Bonello, 'The Hidden History of the Palace Pillage', *The Sunday Times [of Malta]* July 25th, August 1st and August 8th, 2010. Bonello also describes how this painting may have been amongst the paintings by Caravaggio described by visitors to the Palace, such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Frederick Lacroix and Theophile Gautier, in the first half of the nineteenth century. For a full bibliography on the painting refer to Spike, *Caravaggio*, 251.

¹¹³ Ludovica Sebreghondi Fiorentini, 'Francesco dell'Antella, Caravaggio, Paladini, e altri', *Paragone* 383-5, 1982, 108. Dell'Antella commissioned his own portrait in an oval frame, from Justus Sustermans, to hand as a companion piece to the Wignacourt portrait.

¹¹⁴ Gash, 'Painting and Sculpture in Early Modern Malta', 548-9. On this painting, Gash suggests that the painting may have gone directly to Malta soon after its presumed execution c.1619-20. It was first mentioned in the winter apartments of the magistral palace in a letter dated 23 April 1669 from Mattia Preti to Don Antonio Ruffo in Messina: '*nella sala d'inverno del Gran Maestri ci é un bellissimo Cristo che tiene la croce tutto nudo della prima maniera di Guido Reni assai bello ma non ci é rimedio di poterlo avere come é cosa Magistrale*'. Spike, *Preti: The collected documents*, 185. Gash also remarked that it would be 'a culminating example (after Caravaggio and Spada) of Wignacourt's discerning patronage'; Gash, 'Painting and Sculpture in Early Modern Malta', 549.

¹¹⁵ This portrait was commissioned in 1617 to commemorate to mark the passage of the Crypt of St Paul in Rabat to the Order, in the year that Grand Master Wignacourt appointed a College of canons to officiate in the crypt's church. The painting is still displayed inside the College of Conventual Chaplains, Rabat; Dominic Cutajar, 'Caravaggio in Malta: His works and his influence', in *Caravaggio in Malta* ed. by Philip Farrugia Randon, Malta, 1989, 16 fn.27.

¹¹⁶ AOM 1385 (1606), *Corrispondenza GM Wignacourt*, f.104r-v, first transcribed in Stone, 'In Praise of Caravaggio's Sleeping Cupid', 170-71: *Dovendo il Ricevitore Medici mandarci in Firenze un Pittore per dipingere in questo nostro Palazzo ...* [Fra Medici, the Order's Receiver in Florence, will send us a Painter to execute paintings in our Palace.] The letter gives instructions to the Order's Receiver in Naples to greet the unnamed artist and to purchase pigments on his behalf. Stone remarked that the language of the correspondence is similar to that used later in 1609, when Leonello Spada was successfully called to Malta to fresco three of the halls inside the Grand Master's Palace.

¹¹⁷ Sebreghondi Fiorentini, 'Francesco dell'Antella', 383-5; Gash, 'The Identity of Caravaggio's Knight of Malta', 156-160; Stone, 'In Praise of Caravaggio's Sleeping Cupid', 165-177.

(1674-1741).¹¹⁸ In 1708, Perellos signalled a new level of magnificence and splendour within the magistral court with the installation of the Gobelins series of tapestries known as *Les Teintures des Indes* inside the *Sala del Consiglio*, the chamber where the Order's deliberations were discussed (Fig. 58). From correspondence by Perellos, it appears that the Hall for which the tapestries were destined was the last remaining renovation of the winter apartments inside the Palace.¹¹⁹

Perellos had early in his rule taken measures to embellish the magistral palace, by exercising magistral first right in the course of the sale of the *spoglio* belonging to the recently deceased knight, Fra Don Antonio Correa de Souza, and purchasing a set of Flemish tapestries.¹²⁰ Some years later, following the acquisition of the *Teintures*, Perellos extended his programme for embellishing the Palace with frieze paintings in oil on canvas in his private chambers within both the winter and summer wings of the palace (Fig. 59). He commissioned a series on the theme of *Acts of Mercy* displayed as a frieze in the magistral bedroom (Fig. 60).¹²¹ Towards the last years of his magistracy, Perellos also commissioned a series of nine paintings that depicted various naval victories of the Order that took place during his reign; these paintings were paid for by Perellos' successor, who was subsequently re-imbursed out of the Grand Master's *quinto*.¹²²

An eighteenth-century change emphasizing the expression of magistral magnificence was in the architectural changes made to the palace, by the roofing over and enclosing of terraces on the *piano nobile* for the creation of corridors. These long spaces could now function as a gallery for the display of paintings and sculptures, and for leisurely walking while viewing a collection.

¹¹⁸ The commission as well as the involvement of De Mesmes is discussed further below, 'Other influences on Hospitaller art collecting: Artists and Connoisseurs'.

¹¹⁹ AOM 1561, f.753, 5 August 1708: *Au V. Ambassadeur B. De Noailles / Ven. Tre cher ... Le Comr de Mesmes qui doit vous rendre cette Lettre, est charge de faire travailler une tapisserie que nous destinons a la salle du quartier d'hiver de notre palais qui est le seul meuble qui nous rest a Renouveler, et comme nous savones que vous estes home de bon goust, nous desirerions que vous lui donnassies vos conseilz sur cela, et nous serons sur par ce moyen d'etre bien et promptement servis; nous remettant du reste aux diligences que fera Ledit Com.r de mesmes, Cettre Lettre n'estant a autre fin.* The transcript is taken from Gerlinde Klatte, 'Appendix to 'New Documentation for the *Teinture des Indes* tapestries in Malta', *The Burlington Magazine*, 153: 1300, July 2011, 2.

¹²⁰ AOM 647, *Registro Decreti Camera del Tesoro 'D'*, 1697-1706, f.29v: 'Havendo l'Em.mo Sig. Gran Maestro present fatt'istanza che all' Em.ma sua fosse consignata la tapezeria di Fiandra dipendente dallo spoglio del fu' Ven.do Ball di Leza Fra Don Antonio Correa de Souza per servizio e stato del Palazzo Mag.le'. The tapestries were purchased for 1,000 scudi, a reduction from the estimated value of 1,750 scudi. A remnant of this set of tapestries may be the one transferred from the Palace to the Museum of Fine Arts, Malta in the 1970s.

¹²¹ The paintings are discussed in Chapter VII, 'Allegories of Charity and the Seven Acts of Mercy'.

¹²² AOM 925 'B', f.35 [Esito]: Entry dated 8 May 1722: 5°. *Sped.to mand.to del Com.re Fra Afrancio Petrucci Camerier Maggiore dell'Em.mo Regnante [Zonadari] di scudi duecento tre e gr[ani] dieci per manifattura di 9 quadri rappresentati prese fatte da vasselli in tempo del Em.mo defunto, e uno con gli armi del med.mo quale deliberazione s'era presa dal defonto: 223:10:0*

Perellos may have been aware of contemporary theories about the therapeutic effect of art collections,¹²³ as expounded in the treatise *Considerazioni sulla Pittura* by the physician Giulio Mancini.¹²⁴ This described the combined benefit of walking in a gallery and contemplating works of art, especially landscape paintings, together with advice on the care to be given in displaying paintings and sculptures. Mancini had codified art collecting as a princely activity, having had good occasion to arrive at his conclusions by observing art collectors such as the cardinals whom he served as physician.¹²⁵ Mancini's manuscript work was written as a guidebook for princely collectors and for those helping them in assembling and displaying a collection; although his *Considerazioni sulla Pittura* was only available in manuscript form, in various revised copies,¹²⁶ his treatise was widely accessible to art collectors as well as writers on art such as Gio Bellori and Carlo Malvasia,¹²⁷ and therefore also to other Roman dignitaries in Papal circles such as the Order's Ambassadors. Mancini's advice appears to have been actively taken up by Perellos who often spent time in the magistral garden close to the Grand Harbour, which included a richly furnished gallery (Fig. 61), from which he also enjoyed the harbour view.¹²⁸ As with the gallery in the magistral palace, the creation of spaces specific to the display of an art collection enabled long promenades in inclement weather,¹²⁹ available to the Grand Master and his courtiers. The gallery, its length and therefore the number of works of art that could be accommodated therein, was also the locus of private magistral splendour, to be compared to rival galleries in other royal or princely palaces.¹³⁰ During Perellos's magistracy, his court witnessed increasing levels of complexity in the protocols of receiving high-ranking visitors, evident in the detailed account of the visit to Malta by the Russian Tsar's envoy, Sheremetev in 1698.¹³¹ Perhaps significantly, albeit on a more personal note, Hospitaller portraiture took a new direction when Perellos started the fashion for wearing wigs (Fig. 62).¹³²

¹²³ For an exposition on the development of the remedial quality of art from antiquity to the Renaissance, refer to Gage, 'Exercise for Mind and Body and Soul', 1167-71. One of the first publications that dealt with the argument was that by Richard Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, London, 1621.

¹²⁴ Copies of Mancini's manuscript were widely distributed and only published in 1956 in two volumes by the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei as part of the series on unpublished sources for the history of art. Giulio Mancini, *Considerazioni sulla pittura*, ed. by A. Marucchi and L. Salerno, Rome, 1956-57.

¹²⁵ Gage, 'Exercise for mind, body and soul', 1168-1170.

¹²⁶ Mancini's manuscript remained unpublished for over four centuries; Giulio Mancini, *Considerazioni sulla Pittura*, Rome, 1956-57.

¹²⁷ Gage, 'Exercise for mind, body and soul', 1169.

¹²⁸ 'Il Giardino della Marina. È diviso in due parti nella prima è piantata d'agrumi e sta nel fosso del recintu della Città Valletta con bellissima Fontana, da questo si possa passare in altro giardino piantato d'agrumi ed in capo vi è altra bellissima Fontana. Ed infine del med.mo si passa in una bellissima Galleria tappezzata e mobilita, dove S.A.S.m a goda il fresco dell'estate e guarda la bella vista del porto.' AOM Treas. 290 Vol. 1, f.3.

¹²⁹ The development of the gallery as a long architectural form starts to be seen in the mid-sixteenth century; Tatiana String, 'The Concept of 'Art' in Henrician England', *Art History*, 32:2, April 1990, 300.

¹³⁰ Francis I of France may have begun the five-hundred-foot long *Galerie d'Ulysse* at Fontainebleau to outrival Henry VIII's three-hundred and eighty-foot Stone Gallery at Whitehall; Rosalys Coope, 'The Gallery in England: Names and Meanings', *Architectural History*, 27, 1984, 452.

¹³¹ The records of the visit, outlined in the Order's manuscript records titled '*Ceremoniale di Cancelleria*' in the archives of the Order, recount how the delegates entrusted with greeting the distinguished visitor devised elaborate ceremonial protocol to be used in respect of the Russian guest. AOM 6426, ff. 638-647. On ceremonials practised by the Order's ambassadors overseas, ref. below, information on Bali Jean-Jacques de Mesmes, Ambassador in Versailles.

¹³² Observation made by Giovanni Bonello in a personal communication, 2009.

His successors followed suit, with increasing levels of hauteur culminating in the portrait of Grand Master Pinto executed by Antoine Favray.¹³³

A study of Perellos's *spoglio* gives an intimation of other works of art that may have formed part of the magistral collection during his reign. His *spoglio*, dated 1720, includes the first mention of family portraits in the magistral palace. Paintings of parents and siblings or nephews and nieces, would have had a poignant significance to celibate Hospitaller knights,¹³⁴ perhaps more so to Grand Masters, whose circle of trusted friends may have become constrained because of the singularity of their role. The recipient of the family portrait paintings which Perellos had transferred to the magistral palace, was Filippo Lamora, a servant or possibly courtier in his entourage, who was entrusted to accept them in his memory.¹³⁵ Lamora was also the recipient of other gifts from the Grand Master, three small un-named paintings that together with the portraits were valued at 48 *scudi*.¹³⁶ The relatively low price estimate of the paintings would suggest that their value lay in the significance of the subject matter.

The magistral art collection may have been well known in Perellos's time, as he was the recipient of several works of art that were bequeathed to him by Hospitaller knights and even by the Archbishop of Malta, Fra Davide Cocco Palmeri, who presented a painting Our Lady.¹³⁷ Fra Mattia Preti (d.1699) bequeathed a Madonna of Pilar, the patron saint of the Portuguese langue of Aragon to which Perellos belonged. The painting would presumably have been by the artist, although to date, only one easel work on this subject is known to be by Preti. This is currently found inside the Basilica of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Valletta.¹³⁸ Another painting by Preti, titled St Mary Magdalen of Egypt was bequeathed to Perellos by another knight, Fra Ferdinando de Contreras (d.1711),¹³⁹ while a gilt crucifix with a low relief sculpture on the pedestal was bequeathed by Fra Lomellino (d.1699) to the Office of the Grand Master.¹⁴⁰ One bequest also suggests that by this time, the magistral art collection held a significance and value of its own, independent of the Grand Master to whom it belonged, and irrespective of his personal capacity

¹³³ The painting is now displayed inside St John's Museum, Valletta.

¹³⁴ Chapter III, 'Bequeathed Gifts'. Family portraits are included amongst the bequests of some Hospitaller knights, mostly with instructions for the return of such portraits to their respective families.

¹³⁵ AOM 925 'B' f.26v: 'A Filippo Lamora, come a nostro piu antico creato, lasciamo i ritratti di tutti nostri parenti, accio li conserve per memoria et altri tre piccoli quadri, che ci sono stati regalati'.

¹³⁶ AOM 925 'B', f.30v [Esito]: Entry dated 11 May 1720: 'In scudi quaranta otto prezzo delli 7 quadri descritti al [...] quali lego a Filippo La Mora, e si portano in esito del 5° [...] 48:0:0.'

¹³⁷ AOM 931 (34) No. 10, f.69: Fra Davide Cocco Palmeri, 'All' Emm.mo sig.re Gran Maestro Regnante Perellos lascio un quadro con figura della Madonna SS.ma'.

¹³⁸ Spike, Preti: *Catalogue Raisonné*, 304, catalogue entry 246. The dimensions of the painting (200 x 150 cm) are relatively small for an altarpiece, and the earliest documentation stating its location inside the church dates to 1742; Bernardo De Dominici, *Vite de' pittori, scultori ed architetti napoletani*, vol. 3, Naples, 1742-45, 367, quoted in Spike, Preti: *Catalogue Raisonné*, 304.

¹³⁹ 'Al prelibato Emm.mo e Rev.mo Sig.r Gran Maestro mio superiore in segno della veneratione et obediencia da me dovuta lascio un quadro di Santa Maria Maddalena Egittia, pittura originale del fu Cav. Fra Mattia Preti', AOM 931 (4) No. 27, f.388. Preti executed a number of paintings of Mary Magdalen, yet none have been identified with the iconography of Mary of Egypt; Spike, Preti: *Catalogue Raisonné*, 443.

¹⁴⁰ AOM 931 (32) No. 27, f.229v: 'A. S. Em.za et Stato Mag.le lascio un crocefisso dorato con sua croce di ebano et al piede un basso rilievo'.

for appreciating art: Fra Ottavio Tancredi first prepared his inventory in 1719, during the reign of Perellos, expressing the wish that the painting Christ and St John the Baptist be presented to the Grand Master.¹⁴¹ Perellos passed away in 1720, leading to Fra Tancredi correcting his inventory to name his successor, Grand Master Marc'Antonio Zondadari as the beneficiary of the painting.¹⁴²

3.3.5 Other magistral art patrons

Seventeenth-century Grand Masters followed the models of art patronage and art collecting established by Verdalle and Wignacourt. The middle of the century saw the greatest change in the Order's identity by the adoption of baroque art and architecture: Four successive Grand Masters, Martin De Redin, Rafael Cotoner, Nicolas Cotoner and Gregorio Caraffa consolidated the lessons learnt from the patronage of Verdalle and Wignacourt in linking art with power and authority.¹⁴³ The art of painting was itself a worthy subject for depiction within the large-scale mural Allegory of the Triumph of the Order of St John, above the main entrance to the Conventual church. This composition portrayed the Order's charitable and military roles with two vignettes showing Grand Master Rafael Cotoner tending to the sick, and an allegorical figure of *La Religione* standing triumphantly over Ottoman slaves, both set against a background of the fortified walls of Valletta (Fig. 63), while a third vignette shows Grand Master Nicolas Cotoner depicted in the act of pointing with his magistral staff to a large painting of a galley of the Order (Fig. 64). Thus within the allegorical representation of the institutional identity of the Order of St John, the demonstrative apparatus of governance and magistracy is communicated through the inclusion of an oil-on-canvas painting.

The first thrust of each Grand Master's munificence was directed at the Conventual church which, in the view of Nicolaus Pevsner writing on Mattia Preti, was transformed into one of the

¹⁴¹ 'Che sia presentato all'Emo Gran Maestro il Quadretto con i Ritratti di Nro Sig.re e di San Giovanni Battista con cornice dorata, in attenzione della mia religiosa e immutabile venerazione.' AOM 931 (35) No. 16, f.111v, 1 January 1719;

¹⁴² 'Che sia presentato all'Em.mo Gran Maestro il quadretto con i Ritratti di Nostro Sig.re e di S. Gio Battista Bambini con cornice dorata, in attenzione della mia religiosa et immutabile venerazione.' AOM 931 (35) No. 16, f.124v, Codicil dated 15 July 1720.

¹⁴³ Almost one hundred years after the publication of Verdalle's *Statuta*, the Order of St John initiated plans for an official history of the Order. The project was entrusted to one Abbate Don Luca Cenni, who produced a manuscript copy in 1670, '*Historia dell'Ordine Sacro, e Militare De' Cavalieri di San Giovanni Gerosolimitano Scritta dall'Abbate Cenni*', Libr Ms 163, National Library of Malta. The manuscript was first discussed in Giovanni Bonello, 'Two Unknown Mattia Preti drawings discovered at the National Library' in *Histories of Malta IV: Convictions and Conjectures*, Malta, 2004, 61-66. The manuscript included two frontispiece drawings by Mattia Preti: the first drawing celebrates the achievements of the Order with an allegorical composition showing Fame, Time and Truth as well as Religion that is shown stamping over the Ottoman enemy, while the second drawing is composed of two allegorical figures holding up an oval medallion portrait of Grand Master Nicolas Cotoner; John T. Spike, 'Two new drawings by Mattia Preti discovered at the National Library', *Treasures of Malta*, 8:1, December 2001, 29-32. The book never reached publication and its drawings were never engraved, however Preti's illustrations once more represent the centrality of the role of the Grand Master not only in leading the Order of St John, but also over the Order's history, asserting his absolutist rule in the pictorial language that was first articulated by Grand Master Verdalle.

first examples of High Baroque.¹⁴⁴ On the other hand, embellishments to the magistral palace were primarily architectural, or in the accumulation of paintings, decorative artefacts and furniture. Besides the entire refurbishment of the Conventual church interior, its chapels and their altarpieces, Grand Masters also enhanced the church's collection of vestments, monstrances, candle holders, reliquaries, choral books and other ecclesiastical treasures, often as a result of the magistral *gioia*, a statutory instance of magnanimous gift-giving by the Grand Master,¹⁴⁵ which privileged artistic works as suitable gifts. This form of gift was expected at the election of each new Grand Master and was to be presented within five years of his appointment to the magistracy.¹⁴⁶ Such gifts were increasingly magnificent and splendid in their artistry, and fulfilled the classical virtues of *liberalita'* and *magnificentia*.¹⁴⁷

Other major changes to Hospitaller properties were architectural, as in the enhancement of the facades of the Order's buildings, with high relief sculptures atop the main entrances often including busts of the respective magistral patron. At the turn of the eighteenth century, Perellos directed magistral patronage from the Conventual church to the Palace of the Grand Master, initiating a century of absolutist rule expressed through the eloquent medium of baroque art as well as court ceremony and pageantry on a grand scale.

3.4 Other influences on Hospitaller art collecting: artists and connoisseurs

The afore-mentioned Grand Masters may have had personal advisors in matters of commissioning works of art, and in choosing artists. Though none of the advisors had an official role at least three Hospitaller knights would have been candidates to the title, had it

¹⁴⁴ Nicolaus Pevsner, 'Die Wandlung um 1650 in der Italienische Malerei' in *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, VIII pp.69ff, as discussed in John T. Spike, 'Mattia Preti's Passage to Malta', *The Burlington Magazine* 120:905, August 1978, 497.

¹⁴⁵ *Statuta*, Tit. III, Stat. 32, No. 29. The *gioia* was required of any knight who was elected to a priory of a bailiwick, and for each promotion that he subsequently received. This was normally a monetary gift (though the word meant 'jewel') to the Conventual church. This practice, which was part of the Order's customs, became law in 1593. Stefan Cachia, *The Treasury, debts and deaths: a study of the Common Treasury of the Order of St. John and its relationship with the individual Hospitaller in matters of debts and deaths based on Giovanni Caravita's Trattato del Comun Tesoro* (unpublished master's thesis, University of Malta, 2004) 134.

¹⁴⁶ The election of a Grand Master was also the occasion for a gift from the Order's nuns in the monastery of Sijena, Spain. The nuns were bound to present a silver vessel to each new Grand Master on his election. Giacomo Bosio, *Istoria della Sacra Religione*, Vol III, Rome 1594, 834, quoted in Giovanni Bonello, 'Table Ceremonial in the Grand Master's Court', in *Histories of Malta IV: Convictions and Conjectures*, Malta, 2003, 91-2.

¹⁴⁷ Magistral munificence was also exercised beyond the obligation of the *gioia*. One resplendent gift in the form of a gilt bronze sculptural monstace by the Roman sculptor Ciro Ferri (1634-1689), was commissioned and acquired in 1689 by Grand Master Gregorio Carafa (1680-1690) whose escutcheon is prominently displayed: the monstace was intended to hold the relic of the fore-arm of St John the Baptist, acquired as a gift in the Order's Rhodes years from the Ottoman Sultan, Bajazet II. Hanno-Walter Kruft, 'A Reliquary of Ciro Ferri in Malta', *The Burlington Magazine*, 112:811, October 1970, 692-5; SMOM 5AD, *Corrispondenza* 1690, N.107, quoted in Sciberras, *Roman Baroque Sculpture*, 87. The greatest treasure presented to the church through the *gioia* was the set of twenty-nine tapestries, woven on designs by Pieter Paul Rubens depicting scenes from the Life of Christ and allegories, from the Brussels atelier of Judicus de Vos in 1702. Dominic Cutajar, *History and Works of Art of St John's Church, Valletta - Malta*, Malta, 1999, 107-111.

existed.¹⁴⁸ These were Fra Francesco dell'Antella, personal secretary to Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt in the early seventeenth century, as well as Bali Jean Jacques de Mesmes, Ambassador for the Order in Paris, and Fra Marcello Sacchetti, Ambassador for the Order in Rome, both important representatives in the commissioning of works of art on behalf of the Order in the early eighteenth century. All three are known to have been pivotal in the relationship between Grand Master and artist. Of these three, one connoisseur's name stands out thanks to scholarship on Caravaggio, that of Dell'Antella (1567-1624), while the role of Sacchetti in the history of art patronage has only recently started to receive its due attention.

The personal history of Dell'Antella, ranging from his years in Malta up to his demise at his commandery in Florence, provides one of the best documented instances of private patronage, collecting and connoisseurship in the decades immediately after the building of Valletta and the Order's move to its new *Convento* within the Renaissance city. Dell'Antella belonged to one of the older noble families of Tuscany. Subsequent to the *carovane*,¹⁴⁹ at the time of his years in Malta, the young knight was already demonstrating his artistic sensibilities. He joined the Order of St John in 1587, coincidentally in the same year that the Tuscan artist, Filippo Paladini arrived in Malta as a *forzato*, fulfilling a sentence for a violent crime, first rowing in the Florentine galleys and later, in the galleys of the fleet of the Order during Verdalle's magistracy. Within a short time, word of the artist's presence in the Order's galleys soon reached the Grand Master and, through Florentine intermediaries within the Order Paladini was transferred to work on the pictorial programme of the Grand Master's private chapel inside the Palace. By 1589, Dell'Antella would have met Paladini, with whose works he may have been familiar since 1578, when the artist became a member of the Florentine *Accademia del Disegno*. In the magistral palace, the young knight would have certainly been drawn to admire the artist's figurative work in fresco, depicting the life of the Baptist in four panels, together with Sapphic figures on the axial walls. In his youth, Dell'Antella would have also known another Florentine Hospitaller knight and art patron of great standing, Fra Antonio Martelli (1534-1618), who, like the younger knight, was to become a patron of Caravaggio in Malta.¹⁵⁰ Martelli was entrusted by the Grand Master with writing to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Francesco I, to entreat his grace in giving favourable consideration to a pardon for Paladini, whose work had won great favour with the Grand Master.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ The term 'connoisseur' was introduced into the French language around 1649, the year of the 'first publication on connoisseurship ... by Abraham Bosse ... titled *Sentimens sur la distinction des diverse manieres de peinture, dessein et gravures, et des originaux d'avec leurs copies*, Paris, 1649', quoted in Brown, *Kings and Connoisseurs*, 233.

¹⁴⁹ The *carovane* comprised the obligatory two years on the Order's galleys that young knights were expected to fulfil on joining the ranks of the Order. Fra dell'Antella would have completed his *carovano* by 1589.

¹⁵⁰ Fra Martelli held high office within the Order as Prior of Hungary and later as a member of the Order's governing counsel, as well as in the service of Ferdinand I in previous years, as *consigliere di guerra* and as *commissario generale della bande*. Gash, 'The Identity of Caravaggio's *Knight of Malta*', 157.

¹⁵¹ AOM 1588 f.175v: Letter from Grand Master Verdalle to Fra Antonio Martelli, quoted in Stone and Sciberras, 'Saints and Heroes', 141-2. The Grand Master had earlier written to the Grand Duke on the occasion of the birth of his son, Cosimo, including with his congratulations, the wish to see Paladini freed of the prejudices that

Dell'Antella must have had artistic training in his own right although only one pictorial project that he executed is as yet known. In 1600, Fra dell'Antella designed the aerial view of Valletta which was engraved and published as an illustration to the second edition of Giacomo Bosio's, *Istoria della Sacra Religione Militare*.¹⁵² His chorographic view of the city became the second of two definitive representations of Valletta which continued to be replicated by engravers and publishers.¹⁵³ On his return to Florence in 1611, Dell'Antella enrolled with the *Accademia del Disegno*, as 'Achademico',¹⁵⁴ and in 1622 was given the title of *Soprintendente alle Fortezze e alle Fabbriche Granducali*,¹⁵⁵ both roles reflecting his engagement with artistic practice and knowledge of military architecture.

Dell'Antella's role as art advisor came to the fore during Wignacourt's magistracy in the course of his role as secretary to the Grand Master between 1601 and 1611. With the role he played in seeking a court artist for the continued embellishment of the Palace, in 1606 Dell'Antella coordinated the arrival in Malta of a Florentine artist yet the artist never made the journey, nor has his name ever been discovered.¹⁵⁶ In 1609, Dell'Antella reprised the same role in making arrangements for the arrival of Leonello Spada (1576-1622). Spada undertook the execution of the series of frescoes depicting the history of the Order in the four centuries before its arrival in Malta.¹⁵⁷ Similar to the Great Siege fresco cycle by Matteo Perez d'Aleccio, the series is set in a sequence of compositions showing episodes from the history of the Order in Jerusalem, Cyprus and Rhodes, in this instance framed by monochromatic Biblical prophets, illusionistically depicted to appear as marble figures. The individual compositions reflect Spada's Bolognese training under Ludovico Carracci, placing a greater emphasis on figural representation. Dell'Antella's supervision of Spada's works may have involved participation in the final designs for the compositions. However this aspect of his advisory role awaits further research.

Dell'Antella's connoisseurship was given full expression in his collecting practice, through the few oil paintings known to in his possession towards the end of his time in Malta, and through

accompany his status as *forzato*, suggesting that Ferdinand forgive the artist, without however giving him repatriation rights. ASF, Mediceo, filza 4177, letter dated 16 June 1590, unnumbered, quoted in Sebreghondo Fiorentini, 'Francesco dell'Antella', 119 fn.45. Verdalle's efforts were unsuccessful and an attempt was made by his successor Grand Master Martin Garzes (1595-1601), also to no avail. By 1610, Paladini is known to have been repatriated to Tuscany, possibly through the intercession of Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt (1601-1622) and Fra Francesco dell'Antella; L. Sebreghondi Fiorentini, 'Francesco dell'Antella', 112.

¹⁵² Dell'Antella's chorographic view of Valletta was engraved by Francesco Villamena for inclusion in Giacomo Bosio, *Istoria della Sacra Religione Militare di S. Giovanni Gerosolimitano* (Rome, 1602); Albert Ganado, *Valletta – Città' Nova*, Malta, 2003, 557.

¹⁵³ The first definitive chorographic view of Valletta was that by drawn and engraved in 1582 by Matteo Perez d'Aleccio, in *I Veri Ritratti della Guerra et dell'assedio et degli assalti dato all'isola di Malta*, Rome, 1582, XIV, quoted in Ganado, *Valletta – Città' Nova*, 272-3.

¹⁵⁴ ASF, *Accademia del Disegno*, filza 124, c.46, dated 11 Giugno 1613, quoted in Sebreghondi Fiorentini, 'Francesco dell'Antella', 113, 120 fn.54.

¹⁵⁵ ASF, *Conventi Soppressi* 132, filza 112, c.826r, quoted in Sebreghondi Fiorentini, 'Francesco dell'Antella', 113, 120 fn.56.

¹⁵⁶ Stone, 'In Praise of Caravaggio's *Sleeping Cupid*, 169-171.

¹⁵⁷ Stefania Macioce, 'Leonello Spada a Malta: nuovi documenti', *Storia dell'Arte*, 80, 1994, 54-58.

the commissions given to artists for the embellishment of the commanderies that he was given in 1601,¹⁵⁸ and in 1611, the year he left for Italy.¹⁵⁹ Several mural paintings for the church of the commandery of San Jacopo were executed by Cosimo Milanese.¹⁶⁰ Filippo Paladini had earlier been commissioned the altarpiece, the Beheading of the Baptist,¹⁶¹ testimony to the long-lasting friendship that had started in Malta over two decades earlier between the artist and his patron, and that ended only with the artist's death in 1614. The earliest known work to have been acquired by Dell'Antella was Caravaggio's Sleeping Cupid (Fig. 65) that was executed in the artist's last months in Malta and taken by the Hospitaller knight to the Palazzo of his brother, Niccolò.¹⁶² The family's pride in this painting, led to its reproduction in fresco on the façade of Palazzo dell'Antella in 1619 (Fig. 66), together with reproductions of other paintings from the art collection (Fig. 67).¹⁶³ Dell'Antella also owned an oval portrait of Grand Master Wignacourt which he claimed to be by Caravaggio but which is as yet unknown.¹⁶⁴ To match the Wignacourt portrait, Dell'Antella commissioned his own oval portrait, believed to be the one executed by the artist from Antwerp, Justus Sustermans (1597-1681), who had entered the Medici court in 1620, only two years prior to the commission.¹⁶⁵ The portrait by Sustermans reveals a well-groomed man, whose age is indicated only by his white hair, with soulful eyes gazing directly at the viewer (Fig. 68); the sitter's black robe throws the eight-pointed cross in high relief while the realism of the collar harks back to the artist's Flemish roots in the studio of Willem de Vos and his Parisian training with Frans Pourbus the younger. The use of chiaroscuro may be a direct reference to Caravaggio's portrait of Wignacourt, next to which it was meant to be displayed as a companion piece. The portrait's frame is also interesting for the heraldic arms that occupy the four corners in a mannerist adaptation of the oval frame, defining Fra dell'Antella's status as nobleman by displaying the coats of arms of the Antella and Pandolfini families on his paternal side, and the Capponi and Niccolini families on his maternal side.

¹⁵⁸ The commanderies of St Leonard in Siena, and of Santa Maria a Mucciano in Mugello.

¹⁵⁹ The commandery of San Jacopo in Campo Corbellini in Florence.

¹⁶⁰ Sebregondi Fiorentini, 'Francesco dell'Antella', 113.

¹⁶¹ From the 1622 list of expenses paid by Fra Francesco dell'Antella: '*per il quadro di San Giovanni Decollato messo al suo altare di mano di Filippo Paladini, che già fu pagato lire 420*'; ASF, Conventi Soppressi 132, filza 112, n.6, c.780r, quoted in Sebregondi Fiorentini, 'Francesco dell'Antella', 110.

¹⁶² The painting was described in a letter sent by another Hospitaller knight in Malta, Fra Francesco Buonarroti to his older brother in Florence, the poet Michelangelo *giovane* (so called to distinguish him from his famous uncle, the sculptor), enticing him to view the painting on his next visit to the Dell'Antella palazzo. The letter is transcribed in Sebregondi Fiorentini, 'Francesco dell'Antella', 122, and discussed in Stone, 'In Praise of Caravaggio's 'Sleeping Cupid'', 169-171.

¹⁶³ The Sleeping Cupid fresco was executed on the lowermost frieze, in the fourth panel from the left hand side. It can still be seen on the facade of the palazzo on Piazza Santa Croce, together with other reproductions from the Dell'Antella collection

¹⁶⁴ ASF, Conventi Soppressi 132, filza 163, c.99v: '*Per il ritratto del Gran Maestro Wignacourt in aovato col so adornamento d'oro affisso nel muro in testa della loggia che entral nell'orto, di mano del Caravaggio, a perpetua memoria della gratitudine che conserva a ditto Gran Maestro per haverli donato di gratia la suddetta commenda di santo Jacopo in Campo Corbolini; et al riscontro di ditto ritratto del Gran Maestro il ditto commendatore vi ha affisso il suo proprio in tutto son costati lire centoventi*', quoted in Sebregondi Fiorentini, 'Francesco dell'Antella', 108.

¹⁶⁵ This painting is now in the Alberto Bruschi collection, Florence.

As art advisor to the Grand Master, Dell'Antella amply represented the scholarly and visually literate cadets in the Order's ranks, as well as the ready availability of the Order's network of Hospitaller knights from the court cities of Europe, through their personal familiarity with artists and through their proximity to artistic centres while stationed at their priorates, commanderies or embassies. The Order's network of ambassadors was once more put to the service of magistral patronage at the turn of the eighteenth century, when Grand Master Perellos engaged the assistance of Balì de Mesmes and Fra Marcello Sacchetti, in Paris and in Rome respectively, to co-ordinate the acquisition of major works of art and their transferral to Malta.

De Mesmes was the Order's Ambassador in Versailles between 1715 and 1741,¹⁶⁶ a post he may have eyed earlier in 1697, when he precociously alerted the newly-elected Grand Master to the new tapestry series *Les Teintures des Indes* which had just been woven by the Gobelins Manufactory for Versailles. De Mesmes encouraged Perellos to seek a series for the Council Chamber, in the 'winter' wing of the magistral palace. He recommended the innovative *Indes* series over a more conservative series of historic figures, '*comme une des plus belles qui soit dans les garde-meubles du Roy, et d'ailleurs a beaucoup meilleur marché qu n'aurait esté une histoire avec de grands personages*'.¹⁶⁷ Correspondence between Perellos and the then Ambassador in Paris, Bailli Jacques de Nouailles (1700-1711) shows the Grand Master seeking the support of De Nouailles as '*homme de Bon Goust*' in assisting De Mesmes in his project.¹⁶⁸ Although still a Commander (of Sommereaux) De Mesmes knew the corridors of power in Versailles,¹⁶⁹ and succeeded in gaining the King's permission for a set of the highly covetable tapestries, negotiating the terms of the commission with the weaver, Etienne Le Blond.¹⁷⁰ He was subsequently responsible for overseeing their commission and manufacture, based on cartoons of South American flora and fauna, prepared from sketches by Albert Eckhout and Frans Post, artists in the retinue of Prince Maurits of Orange during his journey to Brasilia between 1637 and 1644.¹⁷¹ The tapestries were designed to the exact dimensions of the Council

¹⁶⁶ Leonce Celier, 'L'ambassade de l'ordre de Malte à Paris et ses archives', *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France*, 22:96, 1936, 319.

¹⁶⁷ AOM 1229, ff.171-72v, Correspondence dated 11 November 1708, transcribed in Klatte, '*Teinture des Indes*'.

¹⁶⁸ AOM 1561, f.753, Correspondence dated 5 August 1708, transcribed in Klatte, '*Teinture des Indes*'.

¹⁶⁹ In later years, De Mesmes understood the prestige that came with his standing as Extraordinary Ambassador to the Order, and published an account in French and Italian of the ceremonial that was observed in the Court of Versailles in the course of an audience with the King of France that he was granted in the company of all the French knights, Commanders and Grand Crosses, to inform him of the death of Grand Master Vilhena and the election of his successor; *Relation Du Ceremonial Qui S'est Praticqué Le Jour De L'audience Donnée Par Sa Majeste Tres-chrétienne A Monsieur Le Bailly De Mesmes, Ambassadeur Extraordinaire De L'Ordre de Malte, Pour Lui Faire Part De La Mort Du Grand-Maitre Antoine Manuel de Vilhena et de l'Election de Dom Raymondo Despuig*, undated, c.1737.

¹⁷⁰ AOM 1229, ff.173-74, Correspondence dated 22 October 1708, transcribed in Klatte, '*Teinture des Indes*'.

¹⁷¹ The designs were based on sketches produced by the artists Albert Eckhout (c.1610-1664) and Frans Post (1612-1680) when they accompanied Prince Johan Maurits von Nassau as Governor General of Dutch Brazil between 1637 and 1644. Prince Maurits dispersed his Brazilian collection among various European courts including twenty-six paintings mostly by Eckhout, given to the Danish King, Frederick III in 1654. A large collection of sketches was presented to Louis XIV in 1679. The latter gift led to their adaptation into compositions for tapestry with most of the botanical detail derived from Albert Eckhout's paintings. Dominic Cutajar, 'The Gobelins in the Supreme Council Chamber, *Le Tenture des Indes*', in *Palace of the Grand Masters in Valletta*, ed. by Albert Ganado, Malta, 2001, 93-108.

Chamber and were installed there by the summer of 1710. To this day, the tapestries astonish viewers seeing them for the first time. They portray a multitude of previously unknown creatures and inhabitants of the strange new world of South America, in a proto-Enlightenment pictorial catalogue disguised as painterly composition (Fig. 69). De Mesmes's recognition of the artistry and magnificence of the *Teintures des Indes* reflected a connoisseurial audacity for the innovative, matched by the ease with which he discounted the traditional safety of choosing historic subjects for the decoration of the Council Chamber. In this light, De Mesmes's initiative at bringing about the commissioning of the tapestries for the magistral palace may be more remarkable in that Perellos undertook and fulfilled the acquisition within the parameters of his *gioia*, the gift that was expected of each Grand Master at his election, which previously had only been directed at the Conventual church.

On attaining the post of Ambassador for the Order in Versailles soon after, De Mesmes was active as a patron of the arts. He supported the French historian, René Aubert de Vertôt, and may have been responsible for commissioning Vertôt to write a history of the Order of St John.¹⁷² The volume was illustrated with seventy-one half-length portraits in oval frames, of the Grand Masters and of other dignitaries of the Order. The portraits were engraved by Laurent Cars (1699 - 1771), whose name was inscribed on each image. Cars based his engravings on earlier sets of portraits, such as those published by Anton Francesco Lucini in Rome in 1631,¹⁷³ as well as on contemporary portraits, including those of Bali de Mesmes and of the Grand Prior of France, Philippe de Vendôme, both of which had been executed by Jean Raoux.¹⁷⁴ The portraits of De Mesmes and De Vendôme were the only non-magistral ones amongst the sixty-eight portraits of Grand Masters,¹⁷⁵ indicating a collegial relationship between the two dignitaries extending into a shared appreciation of the arts and the patronage of artists in their own courts.¹⁷⁶

During the same period, in Rome, Perellos also engaged the art connoisseurial skills of Fra Marcello Sacchetti, Ambassador of the Order from 1681 to 1720, to ensure the supervision and completion of monumental art intended for the Conventual church and other locations.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² René de Vertôt, *Histoire des Chevaliers Hospitaliers*, Paris, 1726. Vertôt's history was not officially approved by the Order, with the consequence that his volume ended up on the Index of Prohibited Books. However his writing was the most successful over that of other, earlier historians such as Dal Pozzo (1703, 1715), and Giacomo Bosio (1594, 1602) and his book went through at least sixteen editions in the original French text, a translation into English printed in 1728 and then reprinted four times, and a German adaptation in 1792; Giovanni Bonello, 'Vertôt's History of the Order of Malta', in *Histories of Malta VIII: Mysteries and Myths*, Malta, 2007, 147-160.

¹⁷³ The portrait engravings were published together with the engraved reproductions of the Great Siege frescoes, in Perez d'Aleccio, *Disegni della Guerra*; Toffolo, *Image of a Knight*, 69-70.

¹⁷⁴ Toffolo, *Image of a Knight*, 84.

¹⁷⁵ Vertôt's *Histoire* included two other portraits, that of the author on the frontispiece, and that of Anne de Geneuillac Vaillac (d.1618), the reformist Prioress of the nuns of the Order of St John in France at Beaulieu. Toffolo, *Image of a Knight*, 82-84.

¹⁷⁶ Philippe de Vendôme's patronage of the arts is discussed in Chapter VII, 'Portraiture'.

¹⁷⁷ Information on Sacchetti and Mazzuoli is drawn from Keith Sciberras, *Roman Baroque Sculpture for the Knights of Malta*, Malta, 2004, 39, 72, 117, unless indicated otherwise.

Sacchetti was instrumental in the engagement of the Roman sculptor Giuseppe Mazzuoli for the execution of a number of sculptures to be sent to Malta and to which Perellos gave his personal attention, as seen in his correspondence with Sacchetti. The bronze bust of Pope Innocent XII for the facade of the Church of the Virgin of Victory, Valletta in 1699, the marble high-altarpiece The Baptism of Christ (Fig. 70), and Perellos's own magnificent sepulchral monument, both in the Conventual church, bear witness to the relationship between Perellos as patron and Mazzuoli as artist, mediated by Sacchetti as advisor and connoisseur, resulting in sculptures that register the high watermark of Baroque monuments in Hospitaller Malta.

As the nephew of Urban VIII's treasurer Marcello Sacchetti (d.1629), and Cardinal Giulio Sacchetti (d.1663), both of whom were prominent patrons of art, the young Marcello was familiar with the artistic circles of Rome. His long tenure of the prestigious ambassadorial position often brought the Hospitaller knight into contact with artists. Sacchetti was also responsible for following up on the progress of those sculptors who were commissioned to execute the sepulchral monuments of other Grand Masters inside St John's.¹⁷⁸ He also extended his patronage to the Maltese sculptor and silversmith, Pietro Paolo Troisi by monitoring his training at the Accademia di San Luca and by securing a placement for the young sculptor with a Roman master Academician.¹⁷⁹

Sacchetti also succeeded in owning a significant art collection of his own. Amongst the paintings displayed inside his summer apartment at the family residence, Palazzo Sacchetti, one painting depicted a harbour guarded by a fort and with ships of the Order.¹⁸⁰ His *spoglio* included the note that he had some outstanding debts with artists, although details of none of these are known, as Sacchetti's belongings were ceded to his family as part of his patrimonial estate.¹⁸¹ However, Sacchetti's claim that 'the bed where [he] slept, as well as all the other furnishings, that is, tapestries, curtains, paintings, tables, study-cabinets, chairs, books and everything else found in [his] apartment on the piano nobile where [he] slept, and on the ground floor where he met visitors, belonged to and were to be returned to [his family home], having merely enjoyed their use' gives a sufficient, if minimal, description of the opulence with which he surrounded himself in his lifetime as Ambassador.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ The sculptors were all artists of standing, namely Domenico Guidi, Giovanni Battista Contini, Girolamo Lucenti, Ciro Ferri, Giuseppe Mazzuoli and Giovanni Giardini; Sciberras, *Roman Baroque Sculpture*, 38.

¹⁷⁹ Sciberras, *Roman Baroque Sculpture*, 41.

¹⁸⁰ Sciberras, *Roman Baroque Sculpture*, 42. Refer to Chapter VII, for a discussion on aerial landscape views of Valletta and its two harbours.

¹⁸¹ The *dispropriamenti* occasionally reveal that Hospitaller knights could 'negotiate' terms on joining the entry into the Order, to include the privilege of the return of formerly patrimonial property from Malta to the family estate. Refer to Chapter V for a discussion on familial succession of works of art.

¹⁸² AOM 931 (35) No. 15, f.106v: '*Dichiaro che tanto il Letto dove io dormo, quanto tutti gli altri mobili, cioe' Arazzi, parati, quadri, Tavolini, studioli, sedie, libri, et ogni'altro cosa esistente si nell'Appartamento di sopra, dove io dormo, che in quello da basso dove ricevo le visite, sono e spettano alla mia casa, avendone io solamente goduto il semplice uso*'.

Sacchetti was the model ambassador-connoisseur for his successors in Rome and other Italian priorates, some of whom succeeded in emulating his skill in negotiating commissions with artists. Tommaso del Bene, Prior of Pisa, successfully concluded arrangements with the Florentine sculptor, Massimiliano Soldani-Benzi (1658-1740) for the marble and bronze funerary monuments of two Grand Masters, Zondadari (d.1720) and Manoel de Vilhena (d.1736),¹⁸³ while Fra Jacques-Laure le Tonnelier, Bali de Breteuil and the Order's Ambassador to Rome between 1758 and 1778, built up a magnificent art collection for which a catalogue was published in the course of its sale in 1786.¹⁸⁴ His collection included works by Peter Paul Rubens, Laurent Pecheux, Rosalba Carriera, Pompeo Batoni and Francesco Solimena, amongst others, some of which are now to be found in public collections.¹⁸⁵

The Order occasionally relied on the art connoisseurship of its knight artists in Malta. They too assisted in the course of planning artistic programmes, as well as evaluating works of art amongst the Order's inventory for the *Comun Tesoro*. Fra Mattia Preti, together with the Order's engineer Mederico Blondel, was responsible for the choice of the winning design for the high altarpiece of the Conventual Church in selecting the design by the Maltese sculptor in Rome, Melchiorre Cafà (1636-1667) in 1666.¹⁸⁶

In addition, Preti also acted in the role of agent and dealer for art collectors overseas, in looking out for worthy paintings and sculptures which would surface on the art market in Malta as part of the *dispropriamento* of other Hospitaller knights' property.¹⁸⁷ His correspondence with the art collector Don Antonio Ruffo in Messina gives a unique view into the quality of works of art that were available for sale in Malta,¹⁸⁸ amongst which were two paintings by Titian,¹⁸⁹ one painting

¹⁸³ Sciberras, *Baroque Sculpture*, 43.

¹⁸⁴ Carmen de Pasquale, 'Books and Libraries in 18th-century Malta', 90, 100 fn30.

¹⁸⁵ Sciberras, *Baroque Sculpture*, 46.

¹⁸⁶ On Preti's nomination for the role in January 1666, refer to AOM 261 f.38, transcribed in Spike, *Preti: The Collected Documents*, 57. On the deliberations, refer to AOM 261 f.39 quoted in Theresa Vella, 'Restoration of the High Altar and the Apse of St John's: problems and solutions', in *Storie di Restauri nella chiesa Conventual de San Giovanni Battista a La Valletta: La Cappella di Santa Caterina della Lingua d'Italia e le Committenze del Gran Maestro Gregorio Carafa*, ed. by Giuseppe Mantella and Sante Guido, Malta, 2008, 341-44.

¹⁸⁷ Preti had acted as art advisor in the course of his earlier years in Rome, showing paintings that were up for sale to the agent of Francesco d'Este, Duke of Modena; ASM Cancelleria Ducale, Estero. *Ambasciatori, Agenti e Corrispondenti Estensi*. Roma, busta 262, fascicolo Geminiano Poggi, Segretario 1652-53, letter dated 27 November 1652, Rome, transcribed in Spike, *Preti: The Collected Documents*, 77.

¹⁸⁸ Correspondence from the Ruffo Family archive, dated 13 March 1661 (Preti promised to find a painting 'di gran mano' for Ruffo's collection), and another dated 27 February 1665 (Preti promised to advise Ruffo of any good paintings that become available in the spogli of knights; Spike, *Preti: The Collected Documents*, 173.

¹⁸⁹ Ruffo Family archive, correspondence dated 24 September 1662. The letter describes one painting as a 'S. Giorgio armato di ferro solo il petto e sopra un tavolino il morione e il braziale, da lontano una veduta di mare e terra con il S. Giorgio e una femminella che tira il drago legato che son bellissime, e nel muro un quatretto con il medesimo Tiziano che dipinge, l'altro é un giovanetto apoggiato sopra una spinetta, e con una mano tiene un flauto e nell'altra li guanti et é vestito con una pelliccia e in testa tiene un berrettino con alcune penne tanto bello che par vivo sopra la tavola dov'è la spinetta vi sono alcune carte e libri di musica, nel muro poi vé uno specio donde si vede il giovane piccolo maciato con bellissima gracia'; Spike, *Preti: The Collected Documents*, 155.

by Paolo Rubens,¹⁹⁰ Veronese,¹⁹¹ as well as others by Tintoretto, Salviati, Van Dyck and Cavaliere d'Arpino.¹⁹²

Antoine Favray too enjoyed a reputation as a connoisseur. In 1773, he was engaged by the *Comun Tesoro* to act as valuer during the *disproprio* of the belongings of the deceased Grand Master Pinto.¹⁹³ Favray, described as the 'distinguished painter', put a price to the 138 paintings that were owned by Pinto and which were subsequently sold by the Treasury.¹⁹⁴ The artist was also engaged to design the funerary monument for the deceased Grand Master which was subsequently sculpted in marble by the Roman sculptor Vincenzo Pacetti (c.1746-1820),¹⁹⁵ and placed in the chapel of the Langue of Castile and Portugal inside the Conventual church of St John.¹⁹⁶ Favray also enjoyed a degree of friendship with Grand Master de Rohan. The latter would sit for his portrait in the course of his private meal-times on Fridays and Saturdays.¹⁹⁷

The roles played by Verdalle, Wignacourt and Perellos in harnessing the visual language of art and art collecting, have been fleshed out with a view to demonstrating how the extent of the practice depended on the individual ruler's understanding of the power of art in communicating the authority and dignity of his office. The extent of a Grand Master's success as art patron and collector also depended on the availability of advisors, a factor that continued to be shaped by circumstance rather than system, as with the regular engagement of professionals. Like Wignacourt and Perellos, who could count on the ready assistance of connoisseurs within the ranks of the Order, the more successful patrons of the visual arts, such as Nicolas Cotoner and Caraffa were significantly assisted by the presence of Preti in the seventeenth century, while Pinto and de Rohan exploited the availability of Antoine Favray in the eighteenth century. Yet such circumstances were serendipitous and inconsistent. They thus demonstrate one quality which differentiated the Order's patronage of the visual arts, from that of European art

¹⁹⁰ Ruffo Family archive, correspondence dated 27 March 1663. The letter describes the painting as a 'un quatro di Paulo Rubens di misura di palmi dieci in circa quatrato della istoria di un Marte e Venere con alcuni puttini e anche da lontano la focina di Vulcano assai ben toccata'; Spike, Preti: *The Collected Documents*, 167.

¹⁹¹ Ruffo Family archive, correspondence dated 17 September 1663. The letter describes the painting as a 'mezza figura di un vecio assai bello pure di Paulo da Verona'; Spike, Preti: *The Collected Documents*, 158-9.

¹⁹² Ruffo Family archive, correspondence dated 2 May 1663. The letter describes 'ci sono rimasti altri quarto pezi che sono belli uno del Salviati l'altro pure del Veronese e un altro di Vandicc e l'altro del Cavaliere Giuseppe di Arpino'. Spike, Preti: *The Collected Documents*, 161.

¹⁹³ AOM 926, f.155v: 'Introito dello spoglio del fu' Em.o Fr. D.n Emmanuele Pinto morto li 24 Gennaio 1773 ... Cento trenta otto quadri, diversi, second sono descritti e specificati nell'inventario di ditto spoglio stimati dal pittore dis.to Fabrè sc 3032'.

¹⁹⁴ 'Introito dello Spoglio del fu' Em.o Fr D.n Emmanuele Pinto morto [...] Cento trenta otto quadri, diversi, secondo sono descritti e specificati nell'inventario di detto spoglio, stimati dal Pittore dist.to Fabrè [Favray] sc 3032 con dupplicata nota del med.o Vdo Bali 3,032.—', AOM 925, f.155v.

¹⁹⁵ Cutajar, *St John's Church*, 54.

¹⁹⁶ Lib. Ms 137, *Receuil de lettres, & c. Ecrites de Malte par M. L'Abbe Boyer*, f.2: '... le Mausolé de Pinto dont le dessin a été donné par Favray', quoted in Emmanuel Fiorentino and Stephen De Giorgio, *Antoine Favray (1706-1798), A French artist in Rome, Malta and Constantinople*, Malta, 2004, 181 fn.27.

¹⁹⁷ Lib. Ms 137, *Receuil de lettres*, f.147v: 1 Decembre [1775], *Comme S.E. mange seule les Vendredis & Samedis, Favray profite de moment au quell elle est a table pour prendre son portrait* quoted in Fiorentino and De Giorgio, *Favray*, 182 fn.41.

collectors, who engaged agents and dealers for the acquisition of works, and who employed court painters with the added task of looking after their art collection.¹⁹⁸

3.4.1 *The status of knight artists*

The presence of knight artists from Italy, Spain and France, in Malta, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries greatly enhanced the ready availability of works of art on the Island. In receiving young noblemen as Hospitaller knights, the Order of St John was rigorous in excluding men who worked for a living or whose parents did, yet made an exception for artists.¹⁹⁹ Since the mid-fifteenth century, when Jan van Eyck was honoured as court artist to the Duke of Burgundy, artists elsewhere aspired to receiving recognition of their talents in the form of honours and official titles, as a means of improving not only their status but also their income. The status of the artist in the ranks of early modern society had started to edge away from the lowly rank of artisan as manual labourer, as defined by the guild system,²⁰⁰ towards the role of individual artist as a learned and erudite person, endowed by the patronage of a duke, prince, pope or emperor.²⁰¹ By the mid-sixteenth century, knighthood offered a similar route of self-improvement to artists, though this could be considered only by those who could prove noble ancestry. The title of *Cavaliere* denoted an artist's elevated status, as well as the formal recognition of his artistic ability.²⁰² The high respect in which the Order of St John was held drew a number of artists to seek entry into the Order, as the title of *Cavaliere* or *Chevalier* would greatly enhance their prospects in the world of patronage and prestigious commissions. As part of the community of the knights of St John, an artist could also count on the Hospitaller network to make his name known.

A brief survey of this aspect of the Order's relationship with artists provides a view into an unusual mechanism in the history of art patronage and collecting which was specific to religious communities and which was propelled by the need for expensive decorative programmes of their respective churches. In the face of competition from powerful and rich patrons for the

¹⁹⁸ The role of artist-conservator came to the fore with David Teniers the Younger in the employ of Archduke Leopold. In addition to his work in displaying the ducal collection and ensuring its preservation, Teniers also executed a number of gallery views that established the prestige of Leopold Wilhelm's collection amongst members of the European royal and princely houses to which they were presented as gifts. Margret Klinge, 'David Teniers and the Theatre of Painting', in *David Teniers and the Theatre of Painting* ed. by E. Vegelin van Claerbergen, London, 2006, 10-39.

¹⁹⁹ In 1562, Cosimo I de Medici established the *Sacro Militare Ordine di San Stefano*, largely modelled on that of St John to the point of appropriating the eight-pointed cross, in reversed colours. The Order of St Stephen had a less rigorous process of recruitment and members of Florentine families whose merchant or banking roots precluded them from joining the Order of St John could aspire to joining that of St Stephen. Sire, *The Knights of Malta*, 90, 170.

²⁰⁰ The first guild of artists in Malta was established in 1671. The names of knight artists, namely Mattia Preti and Pedro Nunez de Villavicencio, is absent from the roll-call of its members; Giovanni Bonello, 'The First Guild of Artists in Malta, 1671', in *Histories of Malta VII*, Malta, 2006, 157-9.

²⁰¹ The writings of Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) and Karel van Mander (1548-1606), both artists themselves, were influential in giving wide exposure to the roles of painters and sculptors as equal to those of architect and engineer. Vasari, *Le Vite ...*, Milan, 1807-11; Van Mander, *Het Schilder-boeck*, Haarlem, 1604.

²⁰² The archetype was Giuseppe Cesari (1568-1640), who started out in penury yet who gained the favour of Pope Clement VIII by whom he was made *Cavaliere di Cristo*, thus becoming better known as Cavaliere d'Arpino.

services of the best known artists, religious Orders in Rome such as the Society of Jesus were in a weaker position to engage the first artists of their choice, or even to be able to afford their services.²⁰³ The Order of St John was in a similar position, disadvantaged by its distance from artistic centres and shackled by its own financial limitations. Like the Jesuits in Rome, who took advantage of the availability in its ranks of Jacques Courtois, *il Borgognone*, in the Casa Professa, and Giovanni Battista Gaulli in the Gesù, the Order of St John turned to its own artist-knights for the major art programmes in the Conventual church and other official commissions, and encouraged the enrolment of others, to mutual advantage. The presence of trained and skilled artist-knights in Malta also facilitated the choices of Hospitaller art collectors in exercising the mechanisms of exchange and gift between knights, thereby augmenting their own collections. Exceptionally gifted artist-knights such as Mattia Preti could also execute paintings on themes which were particularly close to Hospitaller interests, as can be seen in the numerous works on Stoic themes by Preti that can be found in Hospitaller collections.²⁰⁴

Possibly the earliest instance of an artist eyeing a knighthood with the Order of St John, was that of the sculptor Arideo Bergonzi from the court of the Holy Roman Emperor, King Rudolph II, when he applied to the Order in 1582 to be received as a knight in the Italian langue.²⁰⁵ The artist's proofs of nobility may have presented some difficulty, as the Order's acceptance took some four years to be concluded. Such a lengthy outcome was not uncommon, irrespective of the Grand Master's authority, since novices with an uncertain pedigree would be the target of opposition by Hospitaller knights who underwent the otherwise rigorous process. One notable instance was that of the conferral of knighthood on Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571-1610) (Fig. 71). The Order in Malta held several prospects for this artist, who was on the run from the Roman judiciary, and who may have held hopes for a successful pardon being negotiated on his behalf between the Grand Master of the Order and the Pope.²⁰⁶

The Grand Master had the statutory authority to confer knighthood on men of exceptional achievement, a rule that could serve to entice an artist to Malta, where several pictorial and decorative programmes in the Palace and in the Conventual Church needed to be designed and executed. This was enabled by a clause in the Order's statutes that allowed the Grand Master to use his judgment in choosing to knight an artist for his extraordinary contribution. This method

²⁰³ Haskell, *Patrons and Painters*, 62-93.

²⁰⁴ Hospitaller choices of pictorial themes are discussed in Chapter VII.

²⁰⁵ AOM 96, ff.25v, 74 quoted in Giovanni Bonello, 'Random Notes on Artists related to Malta', in *Histories of Malta Vol. VI: Ventures and Adventures*, Malta, 2005, 167, 182. According to Giovanni Bonello another knighted artist was Fra Vincenzo de Riccardo from the Langue of Italy, but the author does not quote his source. G. Bonello, 'The First Guild of Artists in Malta, 1671', in *Histories of Malta VII*, Malta, 2006, 159.

²⁰⁶ Caravaggio rebutted objections on his lack of noble blood by pictorial means: when completing the altarpiece of the *Beheading of St John the Baptist*, Caravaggio signed his name in close proximity, and with the same pigment, as the blood that shot out of the prone Baptist's neck, thus leading to the interpretation of this extraordinary pictorial device as a metaphorical statement of the artist's spiritual lineage from that of the Order's patron saint. David M. Stone, lecture delivered in Malta, forthcoming publication.

of 'recruiting' a court artist by enticing him into the ranks of the Order, was often applied in the course of the Order's first decades in Valletta,²⁰⁷ although by the mid-seventeenth century the efficacy of this method had started to diminish. Grand Master Jean Paul Lascaris de Castellar (1638-1667) had been impressed by portraits executed by Pierre Mignard (1612-1695) of several members of the Order painted during the artist's Rome period between 1635 and 1655, amongst which were portraits of Jacques de Souvré, Grand Prior of France (1667-75), of Henri d'Estapes, Commander of Montalone and French Ambassador to Rome in 1652, and of the Commander Del Bene,²⁰⁸ as well as that of Fra Jacques de Cordon D'Evieux (Fig. 72).²⁰⁹ Lascaris tried to attract Mignard to Malta with an offer of being made a Knight of Grace, instigated by the desire of having his own portrait executed by the famed artist. The promise of the knightly title was not enough compared to the wider-ranging promise of Roman patronage. Mignard declined the honour and asked the Order's Ambassador to explain his reasons for not wishing to distance himself from Rome.²¹⁰

Yet by the turn of the eighteenth century, as working conditions in Rome deteriorated, the promise of knighthood, negotiated in the course of drawing the architect Romano Carapēcchia to Malta, came to fruition in 1706.²¹¹ The architect devised and completed several grand projects for the Order's churches, fortifications as well as the Manoel Theatre, and enjoyed the patronage of influential knights such as Balì Giovanni Battista Spinola, whose palazzo he designed and built in 1733.²¹²

Occasionally the Grand Master would be put under pressure by the Pope or by Cardinals to accept the enrolment of the latter's protégée within the Order. Lodovico Cardi, better known as Cigoli (1559-1613), was proposed for knighthood by his patron Cardinal Scipione Borghese, through the mediation of the Ambassador of the Order in Rome, Fra Nicolò de la Marra (Fig. 73). Grand Master Wignacourt reluctantly ceded to papal diplomacy,²¹³ yet immediately withdrew Cigoli's investiture when he learnt that the artist had died suddenly while awaiting the

²⁰⁷ Refer to Dell'Antella's efforts at making arrangements for a Florentine artist to travel to Malta, discussed above.

²⁰⁸ Toffolo, *Image of a Knight*, 43-44.

²⁰⁹ Fra Jacques de Cordon D'Evieux died in Malta on 3 June 1682 at 82 years of age. His *spoglio* included some silver and modest items of furniture, though no paintings were listed; AOM 929, f.6-6v. Cordon d'Evieux's portrait, signed and dated 1653, formed part of the Palace art collection by 1856. On its back is the inscription '*Del Comun Tesoro; Rapporto Preliminare, 25, and Lintorn-Simmons, Description of the Governor's Palaces, 148. The painting is now in the National Museum of Fine Arts, Valletta, inv. no. 4459-60.*

²¹⁰ '*Le Grand Maître Lascaris qui vit plusieurs de ces portraits, en fut si frappé qu'il voulut attirer Mignard à Malthe, afin d'être peint de sa main; & il chercha à l'y engager en lui faisant offrir de le recevoir chevalier de Grace. Ce Peintre recut avec beaucoup de reconnaissance & de respect l'honneur qui lui étoit présenté, mais il se dispensa de l'accepter; & pria l'Ambassadeur de la Religion de faire agréer au Grand-Maître les raisons qu'il avoit de ne pas s'éloigner de Rome.*' S. P. Maziere de Monville, *La Vie de Pierre Mignard, Premier Peintre du Roy*, Paris, 1730, 24-5.

²¹¹ Jo Tonna & Dennis de Lucca, *Studies in Maltese Architecture: 1 – Romano Carapēcchia*, University of Malta, 1975, 4.

²¹² Leonard Mahoney, *A History of Maltese Architecture*, Malta, 1988, 284-5.

²¹³ AOM 458, *Liber Bullarum 1612-1615*, ff.165, 165v: Magistral Bull making Cigoli a Knight, signed by Alof de Wignacourt, 30 April 1613, in David Stone, 'Bad Habit: Scipione Borghese, Wignacourt, and the Problem of Cigoli's Knighthood', in *Celebratio Amicitiae*, 223.

magistral grant.²¹⁴ One artist who aspired to knighthood, yet was unsuccessful, was Lionello Spada who had been summoned to Malta in 1609 to execute fresco paintings inside the Palace of the Grand Master. Although Spada was rewarded for his efforts, according to the biographer Malvasia, his aspiration to knighthood eluded him, and Spada had to content himself with a neck chain (presumably in gold).²¹⁵

Another artist, the Neapolitan Giacomo Farelli (1624-1701), received the assistance of Cardinal Rospigliosi in his bid to join the Order of St John. Farelli was successful and was admitted as Knight of Magistral Obedience in 1669. He later roped in Cardinal Altieri to seek elevation to Knight of Grace, provoking Grand Master Cottoner's refusal. Cottoner's attempt to stop Farelli short of the highest rank of Knight of Justice was successful. He cited Farelli's lack of noble descent as reason for the refusal, although the artist's work was considered.²¹⁶ The above-mentioned episodes illustrate the Grand Master's authority in applying the statutory regulations of the Order to receive artists within its fold, or to keep them out, while his actual ability to do so is illustrated by the differing degrees of success of the measures taken.

Gifted painters within the Order of St John did succeed in straddling the two roles of artist and of Hospitaller knight. Fra Mattia Preti led a successful studio practice in Malta while enjoying the pensions and tithes that became due to him in the course of his life in Malta as a Hospitaller knight.²¹⁷ Yet this was also a gilded cage, exacerbated by late payments of pensions, leading to the belief that this was a tactic by the Grand Master to ensure that the knighted artist would not leave Malta.²¹⁸ Preti's art practice in Malta was also shaped by the Order's political loyalties, as demonstrated by the artist's aborted attempt to seek the patronage of Louis XIV. According to his biographer De Dominici, Preti had executed an allegorical portrait of the French monarch, with the intention of presenting the painting as a gift. When hostilities broke out between Spain and France, Preti grew aware that such a gesture would be inappropriate for a Hospitaller knight

²¹⁴ A portrait of Cigoli by Domenico di Raffaello Peruzzi depicts the artist wearing the Order's eight-pointed cross, while an inscription on the painting states '*Lodovico Cardi cigoli Eletto Cavaliere Hierosol.o*'. Cigoli died before his investiture went through. Stone, 'Bad Habit', 207-229.

²¹⁵ Cesare Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice, Vite di pittori Bolognesi*, 2, Bologna, 1678, 106: '*Dicevano che chiesto anch'egli a Malta una Croce di grazia, il rescritto era stato, meritargli egli molto piu' di giustizia; che pero' non potuto ottenere di porsi la Croce in petto, s'era ridotto con la collana al collo*'.

²¹⁶ AOM 1445, *Registro delle lettere Italiane spedite al vari sovrani, ambasciatori, ed altri personaggi dal Gran Maestro Nicola Cottoner: 1675-1676*, f.48v: '*E di piu che quelli, i di cui padre o avi havessero esercitato la professione del Farelli, non potriano esser ricevuti per Cavalieri di Giustizia onde assai meno puo esser ricevuto in tal grado il Farelli, che l'ha esercitato egli stesso*'.

²¹⁷ To the end of his life in 1699, Preti enjoyed pensions that were due from the revenues of various priories, including the Priory of Lombardy and Pisa, the Priory of Capua, the Priory of Messina; Spike, *Preti: The Collected Documents*, 255.

²¹⁸ Even though a Papal brief empowered Preti to receive pensions from properties of the Order with exemption from obligations of residency (AOM 478, *Liber Bullarum 1661-62*, ff.328v-329), the knight artist still depended on the Grand Master's permission to leave the Islands to execute commissions overseas: '*... molti amici mi anno detto che per tenermi sempre soggetto non mi dava quello che mi anno promesso ...*'; Correspondence between Preti in Malta and Don Antonio Ruffo in Messina dated 17 March, 1667 transcribed in Spike, *Preti: The Collected Documents*, Taverna, 1998, 177.

of an Order which refrained from alliances with one monarch against another, and instead sent the painting to Naples to be sold there.²¹⁹

Other knight artists who aspired to rise in the Order's ranks, would find setbacks that could only be overcome by full proofs of nobility.²²⁰ Those artists who could prove their noble lineage, such as Mattia Preti,²²¹ could aspire to the highest rank as Knight of Justice, while others such as Lucas Garnier and Pedro Nunez de Villavicencio would not attain a higher title than that of Knight of Grace. Yet all knights were expected to live within their means as part of the Hospitaller community, in the manner appropriate to noblemen. Antoine Favray appears to have had some difficulty with producing the requisite proofs on nobility, and acceded to the knighthood within the lower category of *fra serviente* or *armormium serviens* (servant-at-arms), being invested with the honour for his 'devotion towards the hospital of the Order ... making him deserving of exceptional favour and grace'.²²²

On entering the Order as a Knight of Justice, or Knight of Grace, a young nobleman was expected to pay a substantial sum of money as part of the symbolic passage into the Religion.²²³ Some Hospitaller knights who were artists could petition to present a painting in lieu of this sum, leading to a number of works of art that came into the collective ownership of the Order of St John. For example, this clause led to Caravaggio completing his one-year noviciate in Malta with the presentation of The Beheading of the Baptist in the Oratory of St John's in July 1608 (Fig. 74): the inscription of 'Fra' before Caravaggio's name on the canvas was a clear statement of his earlier admittance into the Order, with the title of Knight of Obedience (Fig. 75).²²⁴ In 1751, Antoine Favray petitioned that two lunette paintings that he had executed for St John's

²¹⁹ Bernardo de Dominici, *Vite dei Pittori Scultori ed Architetti Napoletani*, Tomo Quarto, Naples, 1846, 50-51: 'Possedevo ancora [Don Andrea di Giovanni] il bel quadro con Atlante, che sostiene il mondo, la Fortuna, e la Fama con altre figure, che alludevano alle glorie del gran Luigi XIV, figurate in un Marte nel mezzo del quadro, in atto di sguainare la spada, col Tempo allato, che gli offeriva la falce, e l'oriuolo a polvere, e nel volto del Marte si vedea il ritratto al vivo del montovato monarca: e perche' allora, quando il Calabrese ebbe finito questo quadro, con intenzione di farne undono a quel Sovrano, accade rompersi la guerra tra la Spagna e la Francia, il Cavaliere per non compromettere la sua Religione (pioche' lo dipinse in Malta) che vive col patrocinio della Spagna, alla quale manda il tributo de' Falconi, vende' il quadro, che portato a Napoli venne nella mani di Carlo della Torre.' This episode was quoted by Haskell, *Patrons and Painters*, 189.

²²⁰ Sciberras, *Roman Baroque Sculpture*, Malta, 2004, 36-37.

²²¹ AOM 2132, *Deliberazioni della Lingua d'Italia*, ff.242-242v: Review of the proofs of nobility of Fra Mattia Preti, quoted in Spike, *Mattia Preti: The Collected Documents*, 162.

²²² AOM 555, *Liber Bullarum 1751*, ff. 257v-258v: quoted from the Apostolic brief by Pope Benedict XIV in favour of Favray's admission into the Order of St John, and translated in Fiorentino and Degiorgio, *Favray*, 46-48, 92.

²²³ The *passaggio* sums due were established with the Chapter-General of 1583 enacted under Grand Master Verdalle, that is, the sum of two hundred crowns of gold 'or the value of that sum' for Knights, and one hundred and fifty crowns of gold for Serving Brothers. Vertôt, *The Statutes Rule 16, Title V 'Of the Common Treasury'*.

²²⁴ Stone, 'The context of Caravaggio's *Beheading of St John*', 161. Caravaggio's personal circumstances, of being guilty of committing murder, called for papal dispensation for the crime of homicide. Alof de Wignacourt succeeded in acquiring the Pope's dispensation, invoking his right to admit into the Order an 'unnamed and talented person of his choice'. Can. John Azzopardi, 'Caravaggio's Admission into the Order: Papal dispensation for the Crime of Murder', in *Caravaggio in Malta* ed. by Philip Farrugia Randon, Malta, 1989, 45-47. The lack of documentation regarding Caravaggio's *passaggio* leaves the door open to the possibility of Caravaggio's *Portrait of Grand Master Wignacourt and his Page* (Louvre, Paris) as another candidate; this would be compatible with Bellori's account of the artist's work in Malta: G.P. Bellori, *Le Vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti moderni*, Rome, 1672, 209-11. Caravaggio was knighted in 1608 at the end of one year's noviciate in Malta, yet was defrocked within a few months for having left Malta without the permission of the Grand Master.

Conventual church would be considered as his *passaggio* on his enrolment as Servant at Arms with the Langue of France (Fig. 76).²²⁵

Occasionally the ceremony conferring knighthood would take place in Rome, after petitions to join the Order were presented to the Pope. In such cases the *passaggio* would be settled with the Order's representative. In 1630, after having received accolades for executing a portrait of Urban VIII,²²⁶ Justus Sustermans (1597-1681), made it known to the Pope that he wished to be made a Knight of the Order of St John.²²⁷ Sustermans did fulfil his obligations as a new Knight by paying the required sum,²²⁸ although he did not remain a Hospitaller knight for long, as his Medici patrons dreaded his departure for Malta. On 31st October 1642, Mattia Preti was made Knight of Magistral Obedience after petitioning Urban VIII to write to Grand Master Jean-Paul Lascaris. Preti stated that he was born of honourable parents and that his family was never engaged in any mechanical art.²²⁹ His *passaggio* may have been the painting St Catherine of Alexandria visited in prison by the Empress Faustina, which he executed for Don Taddeo Barberini, the pope's nephew, General of the Church and Prefect of Rome.²³⁰

Not enough is yet known on knight-artists and their relationship with the art market in Malta and overseas, to determine whether, and to what extent, their artistic practice may have been shaped by the Order's rules. One consideration is whether paintings exchanged hands through the conventions of gift-giving which ensured that the relationship between the knight-artist and the art collector was kept on a level ground, thereby avoiding the hierarchy that would have been established had the exchange been reduced to a straightforward sale-purchase transaction. One accomplished knight artist who executed a number of paintings in Malta and who was possibly remunerated through gift exchange was Fra Pedro Nuñez de Villavicencio (1635-1700). Nunez de Villavicencio was an established artist in Seville by 1660, the year he served as a founding member of the *Accademia del Dibujo* of that city. By 1663, he was in Malta to start his noviciate with the Order of St John. Little to no archival evidence related to any payments to

²²⁵ AOM 651, *Registro dei Decreti della Camera del Tesoro (1744-1753)* ff.257v-258, and f.267, transcribed in Fiorentino and Degiorgio, *Favray*, 253. Favray presented two petitions, dated 17 July 1751 and 16 September 1751, including a deposit of 50 scudi pending the presentation of the second painting.

²²⁶ The portrait is untraced, as are all the portraits of cardinals in the Papal court. Lisa Goldenberg Stoppato, 'Giusto Sustermans', in *Grove Dictionary of Art*, 30, ed. by J. Turner, U.K., 1996, 41.

²²⁷ Filippo Baldinucci, *Notizie de professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua*, 5, 1845, 484-5.

²²⁸ Baldinucci, *Notizie*, 485.

²²⁹ ASV, *Segreteria dei Brevi*, vol. 903, f.512: '... nato di Padre e Madre honorati, e che mai hanno essercitato arti mechaniche ...', transcribed in Spike, *Preti: The Collected Documents* p.57. Preti's petition was forwarded to Grand Master Lascaris in November 1641, concluding in the conferment of the habit of Knight of Magistral Obedience in October 1642;²²⁹ AOM 469, *Liber Bullarum 1639-41*, f.278, ASV, *Segreteria dei Brevi*, vol. 915, ff.644-644v, transcribed in Spike, *Preti: The Collected Documents*, pp.61, 63. Mattia Preti was already registered as an artist with the Accademia di San Luca around 1636;²²⁹ ASL, vol. 43, fasc. 110, f.69: 'Rolo de Pittori' c.1636, transcribed in John T. Spike, *Mattia Preti: The Collected Documents*, Taverna, 1998, 55. In 1650, Preti was accepted as a member of the *Virtuosi* of the Pantheon; *Archivio della Accademia dei Virtuosi al Pantheon*, Roma, cited in Spike, *Preti: The Collected Documents*, Taverna, 1998, 75.

²³⁰ Spike, *Preti: Catalogue Raisonné*, 132. Spike quotes Richard Spear, *Caravaggio and His Followers*, exhibition catalogue, Cleveland Museum of Art, New York, 145, fn.2. Spear suggested the association between the award of the painting commission and the artist's admission into the Order of St John. The painting is now in the collection of the Dayton, Ohio, Art Institute, Acc.61.108.

the artist has surfaced yet a number of paintings are securely attributed to him. In 1672, the knight artist was engaged on the restoration of a fifteenth-century altarpiece,²³¹ an Enthroned Madonna and Child,²³² attributed to Antonello de Saliba (Fig. 77), in the parish church of St Catherine, Zejtun, indicating that his artistic skills were known in Maltese circles. He left Malta in 1673 to head for Rome, and to return to Seville by 1675. He did so via Malta, completing at least one more painting, this time an accomplished portrait of his compatriot Bali Fra Raymond Soler (Fig. 78). One unusual factor about this portrait is the signed and dated self-portrait done by the artist on the back of the canvas (Fig. 79). The clearly inscribed words '*f.D.Po NZ / D. villavicecio 1674 fbt*',²³³ present a strong statement about the authorship of the Soler portrait, suggesting a form of artist-patron exchange that is closer to that of a gift between friends thus placing both artist and sitter on an equal footing. Gift exchange may have been an effective means of commissioning and acquiring works of art amongst Hospitaller knights yet such means would be relatively difficult to trace. As an expression of knightly behavior, gifts were qualified by a studied informality which often disguised the attendant expectation of reciprocation and therefore could only, at best, be traced in letters or similarly private documents.

3.5 Summation

The magistral model grew out of the art patronage and collecting practices originating in European courts and revealed forms of adaptation in ways pertinent to a community that lived by rules based on religious and military exigencies, and whose head was elective. This chapter has thus demonstrated the ways in which Hospitaller art collecting presents a new, alternative, model for early modern art collecting. The first aspect relates to the relationship between art patronage, art collecting and institutional government, as seen in the role of the Grand Master leading the way in art patronage and collecting amongst Hospitaller knights, through methods that added to magistral lustre and authority, and thereby signalling the Order's adaptation of its Rule to early modern government, in synchronization with practices that were formulated in other European courts. Secondly, the availability of an institutional network of international connections with commanderies and priories, especially diplomatic networks, enabled the sourcing and commissioning of works of art from artistic centres overseas, as well as the replenishment of works of art from Hospitaller collections in Malta and overseas that surfaced on the market in Malta. Thirdly, the Order's own readiness to adapt its regulations to aid the inclusion of select artists amongst its members provided a periodic impetus to the growth of

²³¹ In the exhibition dedicated to paintings of the Madonna in Malta, Vincenzo Bonello included this painting in the section dedicated to Antonello de Saliba, nephew of Antonello da Messina, in spite of the later overpainting that left little to make out of the original work other than the composition. V. Bonello, *La Madonna nell'Arte* exhibition catalogue, Malta, 1949, Catalogue No. 17, 7. The painting is currently being restored.

²³² Mario Buhagiar, *The Iconography of the Maltese Islands, 1400-1900: Painting*, Malta, 1988, 30.

²³³ In full: '*Fra Don Pedro Nunez de Villavicecio 1674 fecibat*'.

Hospitaller art collections. These three characteristics of the Hospitaller model of art collecting present new paths for the study of art collections that grew within religious communities, as well as art collections that grew within a non-dynastic succession of rulers.

This model also widens the geographic boundaries for studies on Renaissance court life, and the use of the visual arts as statements of majesty, towards the central Mediterranean. It demonstrates correspondences between the Order's art patronage and collecting practices, in Rhodes and in Malta, and those of the royal, ducal and papal courts of Europe between the end of the fifteenth and the start of the seventeenth centuries. The significance of the Hospitaller network has been illustrated through some key figures in Rome and Paris, and affirms the potential for future studies of the Order's patterns of cultural exchange with the artistic centres of Europe from the late medieval to the early modern period of history.

The following chapters focus more closely on the ways in which the Order's regulations modulated Magistral and Hospitaller methods of art collecting and subsequently the art collections themselves. Chapter IV provides a survey of the magistral collection, highlighting its role as a model of collecting amongst Hospitaller art collectors. The collections inside the various auberges and other secular buildings of the Order are also discussed for their similar role. Chapter V discusses the findings that are extracted from the *spogli* (inventories) which were drawn up as a statutory requirement of each knight at his death, in anticipation of the *dispropriamento* that concerned the handing over of a knight's belongings to the *Comun Tesoro* and their subsequent dispersal. The findings are also drawn from observations on the regulatory mechanisms that gave rise to, and shaped the *dispropriamenti*, in a bid to understand further the influence and impact of the Order's statutory obligations on the shaping of individual Hospitaller art collections.

IV: THE ART COLLECTION AT THE MAGISTRAL PALACE AND AUBERGES

At the turn of the seventeenth century, in the cultural transformation heralding the beginnings of Hospitaller art collecting, key figures within the Order of St John spear-headed the changes, specifically those Grand Masters who understood how the visual arts could be harnessed to establish the central identity of the magistral role. These men provided a model for other Hospitaller knights whose art collections were another form of the public shaping of self-identity. By the turn of the eighteenth century, the visual arts were harnessed to dazzling effect in order to consolidate magistral absolutist rule. The visibility of the magistral art collection in the Palace, and its sustained existence and growth in response to new artistic tastes and styles over a period of two centuries, imparted a prominence and prestige that led other Hospitaller collectors to emulate it. For this reason, a brief survey of the growth of the magistral art collection under the rule of twenty-one Grand Masters who led the Order of St John, from La Cassière in 1572 to Hompesch in 1798, as indicated by the *spogli* and supplemented by additional evidence, is the focus of this chapter. By enumerating the various artefacts, with the occasional inclusion of other decorative material such as furnishings, it aims to give a closer understanding of the quality and nature of the magistral art collection and its environment. This chapter also provides a similarly brief survey of those works of art known to have been displayed inside other secular buildings of the Order of St John, such as within the residential *auberges* and in the Hospital.

4.1 The magistral art collection inside the palace

The art collection of the Grand Master grew in response to European courtly practice as well as in response to other factors, both formal and informal, specific to the Hospitaller Order, as has already been discussed. The cultural diversity, born of the different national backgrounds from which the knights were recruited, provided a rich social environment in early modern Malta. A collection of works of art, especially those of high quality could resonate across national differences, and could even provide a common point of departure for friendship – or rivalry – between knights. The art collection on display inside the magistral palace was a ‘public’ art collection insofar as the works of art were seen and appreciated by a predominantly male section of society in Malta, mainly Hospitaller knights and visitors to the magistral court. The magistral art collection therefore provided the foremost, constant yardstick against which private art collections belonging to individual Hospitaller knights’ could be seen and measured.

Although Malta was geographically distant from the artistic centres of Europe, Grand Masters were best placed to exploit the Order's networks in order to acquire works of art with which to endow the magistral palace. The Grand Master's pre-eminence within the hierarchy of the Order also ensured that the magistral art collection would be enhanced through gifts of paintings or sculptures. Gifts presented by allies of the Order, or by visiting ambassadors or royal visitors, or even by Hospitaller knights wishing to gain favour, would be kept in the Palace, or displayed within a communal location. A Grand Master was also privileged in being given the first choice of works of art that were to be disposed of or sold off by the *Comun Tesoro*. For instance, key pieces from the art collection of Fra Andrea di Giovanni (d.1715), such as Mattia Preti's Boethius and the Consolation of Philosophy (Fig. 80) and Diogenes and Alexander, which were kept in his palace in Messina, Sicily were brought to Malta and displayed amongst the magistral collection (Fig. 81).¹ The paintings appear in two early nineteenth-century watercolour views of the palace halls by C.F. de Brocktorff.²

The magistral art collection formed part of the magistral estate that comprised three palaces. The magistral palace is located in Valletta (Fig. 82), while two others, San Anton Palace (Fig. 83) and Verdala Palace (Fig. 84), are situated outside the city and were used as summer residence or as a hunting lodge. The magistral estate was separate from the private property of the Grand Master. Its first mention in bequests by Grand Masters is that by Alof de Wignacourt (d.1622), who bequeathed several tapestries and furniture items to the magistral office ('*allo stato del Magistero*').³ The first mention of works of art as part of a bequest by a Grand Master to the magistral estate was that by Wignacourt's successor, Luis Mendez de Vasconcellos (d.1623) who bequeathed five paintings, tapestries and other items of furniture ('... *restino lo stato del Magistero*').⁴ Several other Grand Masters bequeathed their belongings to enrich the magistral estate. Those who refrained from doing so, such as Grand Master Pinto de Fonseca, left the fate of their collection to the *Comun Tesoro*. The outcome was the sale and subsequent dispersal of those belongings that formed part of the Grand Master's personal *spoglio*, including his art collection comprising 138 paintings, evaluated and sold for 3032 scudi.⁵ Although a few instances of dispersal of works of art from the magistral collection are known,⁶ in general practice the magistral collection was usually augmented from one reign to the next, and only rarely diminished at transitional instances.

¹ AOM 931 (24) No. 35, f.214-216v.

² Theresa Vella, *Charles Frederick de Brocktorff: Watercolours of Malta at the National Library, Valletta*, vol. II, Malta, 2008, 137, 149.

³ AOM 924, f.2.

⁴ AOM 924, f.30v.

⁵ AOM 926, f.155v: *Introito dello spoglio del fu' Em.o Fr. D.n Emmanuele Pinto morto li 24 Gennaio 1773 ... Cento trenta otto quadri, diversi, second sono descritti e specificati nell'inventario di ditto spoglio stimati dal pittore dis.to Fabr  sc 3032.*

⁶ Vasconcellos bequeathed twelve paintings but left the rest to '*lo stato del magistero*': AOM 924 'A' 3, f.25: '*Dodecinni quadri nella quale e' dipinto l'Assedio di Malta con condition che le debbia mandare in Siena in casa sua per memoria dell'affettione n.ra verso la persona sua* [Fra Giocondo Accarigi]'.
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The inventories of various Grand Masters' property included any objects or commodities that were acquired during the respective reign, ranging from furnishings and clothing to food and other consumables such as wood and wax, livestock, horses and mules, including all items needed in the daily running of a magistral palace. Such goods that were left behind would be transferred to the *Comun Tesoro* and subsequently purchased by the succeeding Grand Master.⁷ Precious items, such as works of art, tapestries, furniture and other decorative forms of furnishings, acquired during a Grand Master's reign could be bequeathed to the magistral estate, to be enjoyed and used (but not disposed of) by his successor.

As the only Hospitaller art collection that may be compared to 'dynastic' or inherited collections in European courts in consideration of the accretionary nature of its growth, the art collection enjoyed by successive Grand Masters was protracted in its existence as the foremost model or benchmark to be emulated by other knights in Malta. The cumulative method by which the magistral art collection was augmented permits a chronological survey of the works of art known to have been in the possession of a succession of Grand Masters, as derived from the archival inventories of various knights and Grand Masters. The latter documents, relating to magistral inventories, are relatively sparse of references to works of art, a factor that is difficult to explain in the case of those Grand Masters who were well served by artists, such as Martin de Redin and Nicolas Cotoner.⁸ For this reason, the following survey is based on the documentary evidence afforded by the *spogli*, supplemented by the material evidence of existing works of art which are known to have been displayed inside the Palace.

As shown in Chapter III, the building of the magistral palace at the centre of the new city of Valletta heralded the Renaissance values which underpinned the artistic decoration of the Order's secular sites and residences. Grand Master La Cassière commissioned the Great Siege fresco cycle which gave a new visual form to the Order's geographic and political concerns, while Grand Master Verdalle harnessed the visual media of print, as well as an antiquarian collection that, together with his introduction of courtly practice within the magistral palace, demonstrated how art could serve to formulate and disseminate the iconography of magistral rule.⁹ Amongst Verdalle's collection were a number of antique high-relief portraits in profile of female personages from Roman Imperial history (Fig. 85, Fig. 86), as well as easel works by Filippo Paladini, an oval bust portrait of the Grand Master in cardinal's robes and a devotional painting of his namesake saint, *St Ugo*. Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt refined the Order's methods of engaging leading Italian artists such as Caravaggio, Leonello Spada and Guido Reni

⁷ AOM 924, f.2v: documents relating to the dispersal of Grand Master Rafael Cotoner's property describe how all the items found in the Palace were acquired by the succeeding Grand Master for the sum of 9,562 *scudi* 5 *tari*— *Per prezzo delle sottoscritte robbe ritrovate in Palazzo trattenute per il modern Emminent.mo Sig. Gran Maestro* 9562 – 5 – 15.

⁸ Refer to Chapter III, 'Key Magistral Models of Art Collecting in Malta'.

⁹ Refer to Chapter III, 'Key Magistral Models of Art Collecting in Malta', for a discussion on the art patronage of Grand Masters La Cassière, Verdalle and Wignacourt.

to enrich the art collection that was displayed inside the magistral palace. Wignacourt also commissioned a number of his portraits in armour, of which one was to be displayed within the Palace Armoury. He also purchased a painting of Christ carrying the Cross by Guido Reni (Fig. 57), which was acquired in Rome and transferred to Malta.

A first indication of a magistral art collection being independent of a privately-owned collection, is given in the *disproprietamento* of Grand Master Luis Mendez de Vasconcellos (1622-23) who, like other Grand Masters before him enjoyed the palace embellishments that had been successively endowed by his predecessors. Through his bequest, Vasconcellos endowed the palace with paintings and other decorative furnishings. He left the brocade damask and a canopy in red and yellow damask, to the palace chapel and the magistral estate,¹⁰ as well as red and yellow damask and green and red damask in two of his private chambers.¹¹ He also bequeathed a large gilt clock that marked time in hours and quarters, decorated with a figure of cupid above a sphere and four pyramids at each corner.¹² To the magistral art collection he also bequeathed five paintings in gilt frames, namely, Our Lady, based on a similar painting in the Roman church of Santa Maria Maggiore, Our Lady with a sleeping Child Jesus and St John the Baptist (Fig. 87), Mary Magdalen in Ecstasy, St John the Baptist, and St Louis, King of France in the act of giving charity, as well as thirty-seven paintings of unknown subject, that were displayed in his private rooms.¹³ The description of the paintings being displayed '*sopra il fregio della Tappezzeria nella n.ra retrocamera*' suggests that the paintings were of similar dimension, and displayed in a frieze-like manner, high above the damask hangings that adorned the Grand Master's private chamber. The archives simultaneously suggest that Vasconcellos also disposed of some of the palace holdings. His testament reveals how he bequeathed a series of twelve paintings on the theme of the Great Siege to Fra Giocondo Accarigi, the executor of his will. The number of paintings corresponds to the twelve frescoed compositions in the Grand Council Hall of the Palace which had been executed over four decades earlier, and may have been the artist's *modelli* for the final work.¹⁴

¹⁰ AOM 924, f.30v: *dichiariamo che la Tapezzzeria di brocato che guarnisce la mia Cappella Magistrale e la nostra retrocamera, con il Pavaglione di damasco rosso e giallo che sta nel nro letti insieme con la Trabacca dorata restini lo stato del magistero.*

¹¹ AOM 924, f.31: *Lasciamo similmente al medo Stato [del magistero] due camera di Tapezzerie di damasco l'una rossa e gialla e l'altra verde e rossa usata.*

¹² AOM 924, f.31: *Lasciamo ancora allo medesimo Stato [del magistero] l'orologio grande con il suo scannello che suona l'horò e quarti tutto dorato con un cupido sopra una palla, e quattro piramidetti nelle angoli.*

¹³ AOM 924, f.30v: *E similmente lasciamo per il Stato [del magistero] cinque quadri con le loro cornice e parte dorato cioè uno di Nra Sig.ra simile a la S.M. Maggiore di Roma, un altro pur di nra Sig.ra con il Bambino Gesu' dormiente e San Gio. Batta, uno di S. Maria Maddalena in estasi, et uno di S. Gio. Batta et uno di S. Luigi Re di Francia in atto di dar elemosina, e similmente trentasette quadri piccioli che sono sopra il fregio della Tappezzeria nella nro retrocamera, lasciamo allo Stato [del magistero].*

¹⁴ AOM 924, f.29v: *Dichiariamo haver donato al Comm.e Fra Giocondo Accarigi Seg.ro del n.ro Comun Tesoro li dodecinni quadri nelli quali é dipinto L'Assedio di Malta con conditione che le debbia mandare in Siena in casa sua per memoria dell'affettione nra verso la persona sua.* The Vasconcellos bequest was first discussed by Giovanni Bonello, who raised the possibility that the series of eight paintings on the same theme that are currently held at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich may be one and the same as the paintings bequeathed by Vasconcellos. G. Bonello, 'Francesco Potenzano and Matteo Perez d'Aleccio: The first painters in St John's', in *Histories of Malta Vol. VI: Ventures and Adventures*, Malta, 2005, 46. Conversely, it is also possible that the set of

The archives also show that by the second half of the seventeenth century, the magistral art collection started to be augmented through the Hospitaller system of gift-giving, that is, works of art bequeathed by Hospitaller knights by means of the *quinto*. Grand Master Nicolas Cotoner (1663-1680) was the recipient of a Magdalen, from the collection of Fra Cesare Lopez (d.1666), an art collector with 49 listed paintings in his *spoglio*.¹⁵

Some Grand Masters owned a greater number of works of art and decorative objects, than those they would have transferred to the Palace at their election. In such cases, those items would have formed part of the *spoglio* to be disposed of by the *Comun Tesoro*, in keeping with the Order's statutes, unless the Grand Master would have specified them in his bequest for the endowment of the Palace or other Hospitaller building. Grand Master Fra Don Gregorio Caraffa (1680-1690) held a sizable amount of furniture prior to his election, perhaps unsurprisingly owing to the large palazzo he lived in before moving to the magistral palace.¹⁶ Caraffa may have taken some of his paintings from his private residence to the Palace, and displayed them inside the magistral chapel as well as in his private rooms. He had previously been the recipient of several works of art bequeathed to him by Hospitaller knights. During his time as Prior, Caraffa had received a painting of the Seven Angels from Fra Cesare Lopez (d.1666),¹⁷ while during his magistracy, he was invited to choose a painting from the collection of the knight Grand Cross Fra Gabuccini (d.1681) in keeping with the latter's bequest.¹⁸ In his testament Caraffa declared that he had given his furniture away at his election, but that the rest was to form part of his *spoglio*, at the disposal of the *Comun Tesoro*.¹⁹ One such precious object was a clock that displayed a picture of King Ezechiel and which was valued for the sum of 100 *scudi*.²⁰

paintings had been commissioned by Vasconcellos, with the intention of presenting them as a state gift in his lifetime.

¹⁵ AOM 931 (28) No. 6, f.30: '*prego l'Em.o Sig.r Gran Maestro Cotoner degnarsi accettare in segno della mia servitù verso l'Em. Sua il Quadro della Maddalena*'. Fra Lopez was *Segretario del Comun Tesoro*, a privileged position to preview and acquire works of art from the dispersal of the property of other Hospitaller knights. On the *quinto*, refer to Chapter III, 'Bequeathed Gifts'.

¹⁶ AOM Treas A1, f.64 quoted in Victor Denaro, 'Houses in Kingsway and Old Bakery Street, Valetta', *Melita Historica*, 2: 4, Malta, 1959, 201, 215. Palazzo Caraffa (No. 94, Old Bakery Street, Valetta) belonged to Fra Don. Carlo Caraffa, brother of Gregorio.

¹⁷ '*Piu dono all'Ill.mo Sr Pr della Roccella Caraffa il quadro delli sette angeli*'. AOM 931 (28), No. 6 f.80. On bequests of works of art, refer to Chapter V, 'Bequeathed Gifts'.

¹⁸ '*Il Gran Prior vuole e ordina che si diano all'Infr Signore cose in segno di gratitudine cioe all' Ill.mo Sig.re Priore della detta Sac. Relig. e sua Chiesa Mag.re Conventuale Fra Don Gregorio Caraffa Prior della Roccella un quadro per uno addelitt.re loro dalli quadri d'esso ill.mo e sponete*'. AOM 931 (30) No.12, f.64.

¹⁹ AOM 925, f.2: '*Dichiariamo che tutti i mobile che havevamo prima della nostra assontione al Magistero, eccettuat qualli, che habbiamo gia dati in vita, e quelli ancora di quali si serve il Com.re Fra Gio Domenico Manso per comodo suo, et ornam.to di sua casa, quali lasciamo e doniamo a lui med.mo, li restanti siano compresi nel nostro spoglio*'.

²⁰ AOM 925, f.3v: '*Di piu ha dichiarato che l'Orologio muto di note con mostra per il giorno vada per spoglio*'; AOM 925 'B', f.6v [income]: '*un orologio muto da note con l'istoria del Re Ezechiel ... stimato per 100 scudi*'.

Caraffa included in his bequest a portrait of St Dominic in Soriano as well as other un-named small devotional pictures that were to remain inside the magistral chapel.²¹ He also added the main pieces to be bequeathed to the magistral office (*'vuole che restino in Palazzo per Stato'*), specifically one un-named painting with an ivory cross embedded within it and covered in glass, a silver-framed painting of the Immaculate Conception with indulgences granted by Pope Alexander VII (1655-1667), a gilt-framed painting of the Madonna and Child Jesus, as well as a gilt-framed pastel-on-paper picture of the Magdalen.²² The separate listing implies that the above-mentioned four devotional paintings were not displayed in the chapel but within the Grand Master's chambers, and may have been appreciated for their artistry as well as for any additional value which they may have held for Caraffa. (The Immaculate Conception with papal indulgences may have been an earlier papal gift to Fra Gregorio Caraffa. Fabio Chigi had served as Inquisitor in Malta between 1634 and 1639 before being appointed Pope Alexander VII).

Other works of art and precious objects from Caraffa's collection may have been displayed inside the Palace, as he also bequeathed an ivory crucifix on an ebony pedestal with polychrome marble decoration, a framed painting of St Dominic in Soriano, and a miniature painting of St Theresa,²³ as well as a silver statue with a relic of Sta Rosolea, a coral crucifix with a silver filigree pedestal and a silver-gilt vessel with a statuette of Sta Rosolea.²⁴

The reign of Grand Master Perellos y Roccaful saw new levels of magistral art patronage.²⁵ Besides the extraordinary tapestry series, Les Teintures des Indes, the Palace was embellished with two cycles of frieze murals in oil on canvas in both the summer and winter magistral chambers, the former on the theme of the Seven Acts of Mercy,²⁶ while the latter depicted allegorical figures. The Palace art collection was also augmented by means of bequests, with paintings of the Madonna of Pilar, St Mary Magdalen of Egypt, both by Mattia Preti, and another of Our Lady, as well as a Christ and St John the Baptist and a gilt crucifix with a low relief sculpture on the pedestal.

²¹ AOM 925, f.3v: *'Di piu vuole che il Ritratto di S. Domenico in Soriano con altri piccolo quadretti di sua devotione restino dentro la Cappella di Palazzo'*.

²² AOM 925, f.3v: *'che un quadro dentrovi un crocefisso d'Avorio con Cristallo innanzi, un'altro quadro della Concettione con le cornice d'argento, et Indulgenti di P.P. Alessandro VII. Un altro quadro della Madonna col Bambino in braccia con cornice nera e dorata. Un'altro quadro della Madalena sopra carta toccata a pastiglia con cornice dorata, tutti li nominate pezzi, vuole che restino in Palazzo per Stato'*.

²³ AOM 925, f.3v: *'di piu a dichiarato che lascia il Crocefisso d'Avorio col piede d'ebano et ornamento di pietre colorite al Medico Zammit sopra il suo quinto. Al Com. Fra Gio Dom. Manso un quadretto di S. Domenico in Soriano col Cristallo, et a Dionisio la Costa un quadretto miniato di S. Teresa sopra il suo quinto'*. In the expenses and income section of the documents, the crucifix was valued at 30 scudi, the St Dominic painting was valued at 15 scudi and the St Teresa miniature was valued at 5 scudi.

²⁴ AOM 925, f.3: *Esito / Introito dello Spoglio Caraffa* [expenses and income from the dispersal of the Caraffa property]: Entry dated 29 July: *'in scudi novanta cinque e tari sei e grani quindici [95 sc - 6 t - 15 gr] prezzo della statua d'argento con la reliquia di Sta Rosolea legata alla ... Principessa di Butera l 47:7:10 prezzo del crocefisso di corallo con il suo piedestallo di filigrano d'arg.to stimati di 26:3 e della giarra d'arg.to dorata di dentro con la statueta di S. Rosolea di peso 1:2:¼ a 18sc la [...] 21:4:10 legati alla D. Giulia Caraffa'*.

²⁵ Refer to Chapter III, 'Key Magistral Models of Art Collecting in Malta' for a discussion on the art patronage of Perellos.

²⁶ The frieze cycle of paintings are discussed in Chapter VII.

Marc'Antonio Zondadari was the successor to the resplendent rule of Raymond Perellos y Roccaful. His reign was short-lived (1720-1722) yet it is plausible to hypothesize that he was an art collector, having been the recipient of works of art through the bequests of other knights, namely a small painting of The Death of Sophonisba,²⁷ and a painting showing the Portraits of Grand Masters.²⁸ Zondadari may therefore have brought to the Palace other works of art from his own collection. One nineteenth-century source mentions that the Palace art collection was first formally established during Zondadari's reign.²⁹ It would also appear that he saw to the conclusion of major structural works within the Palace bringing it up to a scale of magnificence that could befit the absolutist role that Grand Masters aspired to by the turn of the century. In the course of the *disproprioamento* of his property, a payment was made to the master mason Francesco Zerafa (c.1679-1758) for new structures inside the Palace.³⁰ Another payment was made to the surveyor Gio. Francesco Bezzina (active first half, eighteenth century) for compiling a *cabreo* (a manuscript inventory of lands) of the property that belonged to the Grand Master's Office.³¹ The *cabreo* included a plan of the magistral palace showing the major changes that had been made to the façade of the building where a second entrance was created (Fig. 88).³² This finding challenges the long-held belief that the present-day façade to the Palace was completed during the later reign of Grand Master Pinto de Fonseca (1741-1773), and posits this to have been completed during the reign of Grand Master Zondadari (1720-1722), with a possible starting date during the reign of Grand Master Perellos (1697-1720).

Amongst the changes that were made to the Palace during Zondadari's reign, was the enclosing of the open terrace that overlooked the central courtyard by means of a Loggia and later, windows. These changes led to the creation of a grand corridor that spanned the four main wings of the Palace. Zondadari invited the Sienese artist, Nicolo Nasoni (1691-1773),³³ to execute a series of *trompe l'oeil* ceiling paintings that transformed the new palace corridors into

²⁷ 'All'ill.mo Commde. Fra Marco Antonio Zondadari lasso per memoria un quadro piccolo con la rapp. Quando Sofonisba doppo letta la lettera domanda la Tzza del Veleno prima che andar prigionie di [guerra], di nro 46'; AOM 931 (34) No. 23, f.168v, Fra Mario Bichi, (d.1711). This painting is now displayed in the National Museum of Fine Arts, having been purchased from a private collection in 1933. Ref Chapter V.

²⁸ AOM 931 (35) No. 16, f.112v: Fra Ottavio Tancredi (d.1720), 'A Ven. Baglio Fa Marc'Antonio Zondadari mio riverito Sig. E buon amico, lascio il quadro della Cronologia dei Gran maestri della Nostra Sacra Religione' On Zondadari's succession to Grand Master, Tancredi modified his *spoglio* to reflect the beneficiary's new status.

²⁹ Lintorn Simmons, *Description of the Governor's Palaces*, 13.

³⁰ AOM 925, f.51 [Esito]: Entry dated 24 July 1722: *sped.to mand.to di scudi cento cinquanta al Capo Mastro dell'Opere Francesco Zerafa per li servizi resi dal med.mo al fu Em.mo defonto nella nuova fabrica fatta in Palazzo, et altro come viene dichiarato nello sproprio: 150:0:0*

³¹ AOM 925, f.51 [Esito]: Entry dated 28 July 1722: 'a Gio. Fran.co Bezzina per il Cabreo de' Beni Mag.ti ordinatoli dall'Emo defonto: 350:0:0'.

³² AOM Treas. 290, f.1: 'Palazzo Magistrale'.

³³ Jose Fernandes Pereira, Nicoló Nasoni, in *The Grove Dictionary of Art*, Book 22, Oxford, 1996, 532-4: 'Nasoni lived and trained in Siena between 1713 and 1720, designing catafalques and triumphal arches. While in Malta he met the Brother of the Dean of the diocese of Oporto, Dom Jeronimo de Tavora e Novonha Leme Carnache (1690-1754) and it was through the invitation of the latter that he went, about 1725, to Oporto to direct the redecoration and modernisation of the Romanesque Cathedral'; also, J.B. Bury, 'Late Baroque and Rococo in North Portugal', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 15: 3, October 1956, 7.

a marvel of pictorial architecture and 'Late-Baroque elegance',³⁴ yet the Grand Master did not live to see the completion of this cycle of paintings (Fig. 89).³⁵ Nasoni is better known for his later work in Oporto as architect to John V, King of Portugal, after leaving Malta in 1731. His highly ornamental style, defined by its 'powerful, restless granite ornamentation' influenced Northern Portuguese architecture for several years in the mid-eighteenth century.³⁶

The reign of Zondadari's successor, Grand Master Antonio Manoel de Vilhena (1722-1736) epitomises the link between Baroque art and the Absolutist state of governance in Malta. Vilhena harnessed the skills of sculptors such as the Maltese Master of the Mint, Pietro Paolo Troisi (1686-1750), commissioning several bronze busts and a full-length statue for their placement in public spaces (Fig. 90). The most prominent sculpture of Vilhena was actually a gift by the knight Fra de Savasse, and was displayed at the centre of the parade ground of Fort Manoel, and could be widely seen from Valletta (Fig. 91), while the high relief portrait sculpture atop the entrance to Vilhena Palace in Mdina ensured that Malta's nobility were reminded of who ruled them on a daily basis. Vilhena also made modifications to Verdala Palace and its grounds, including the placement of a massive stone coat of arms atop the new entrance.

At a private level, it would appear that Vilhena's appreciation of art also extended to augmenting his own collection of paintings. This is indicated by the bequests of paintings and sculpture made to him by Hospitaller knights. Fra Francesco Artimone (d.1727) entreated the Grand Master to deign to accept a gilt bronze sculpture of the figure of Christ, with its ebony pedestal and glass cover, for his enjoyment, as a sign of his respect and obedience.³⁷ Fra Nicolò Marulli (d.1730) also bequeathed a framed ivory crucifix to Manoel de Vilhena as a sign of respect,³⁸ while another ivory crucifix was bequeathed by Fra Cristoforo Balbani who remarked on the sculpture's rarity and its value.³⁹ Fra Filippo Wolfango (d.1733), Bali of Gothenburg, left two of his best paintings, un-named in the documentation, as a sign of his reverence to the same Grand Master.⁴⁰ In 1735, Fra Orfeo di Vincenzo bequeathed a painting of his homeland patron

³⁴ Gash, 'Painting and Sculpture in Early Modern Malta', 587.

³⁵ AOM 925 f.53, entry dated 9 September 1722: '... sped.to mand.to a Nicolò Nasoni di scudi quaranta otto di.[...] che la Vda Camera deliberò pagarglisi a suo accesso in Malta ordinatogli dal sud.o fu Em.mo defonto [Zondadari] p[er] dipingere nel palazzo mag[istral]e come dal mand. 48. —. '

³⁶ Hellmut Wohl, 'Recent Studies in Portuguese Post-Mediaeval Architecture', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 34: 1, March 1975, 72-73.

³⁷ 'Nel predetto mio sproprio supplisco alla parte piu essenziale della mia rispettuosa attenzione verso l'Emo Gran Maestro mio Superiore supplicandoli a degnarsi di benignamente gradire un Christo dorato che tengo nel mio Capezzale con suo cassa d'Ebbano coperta d'un Christallo per piccolo segno del mio reverentissimo ossequio, che intendo professare all'Em.za sua fin'all'ultimo respiro', AOM 927, f.5v.

³⁸ AOM 927, f.29v: 'Lascio poi in titolo di ricognizione all'Em.mo Sig.re Nostro Gran Maestro un crocifisso d'Avorio pendente in un quadro sopravelluto nero, al muro nel capezzale del mio letto'.

³⁹ AOM 931 (35) No. 29, f.182: 'In conferma della veneration da me sempre portata alla degna persona del present Em.mo sig.re Gran Maestro [Vilhena] li lascio quell mio crocifisso d'avorio, con l'impronta delle proprie armi che se stimabile, per la rarita' della scultura, molto piu sara per quella sacra santa immagine che rappresenta'.

⁴⁰ AOM 927, 40v: 'Lascio a Sua Em.za in attestato della venerazione che sempre le attestai due dei migliori quadri dipinti che ho nella mia sala'.

saint, Our Lady of Trapani, as a sign of his good will towards the Grand Master.⁴¹ Another ivory crucifix was bequeathed by Fra Amadeo de Cajs (d.1730).⁴² He also received a Virgin and Child Jesus with St John bequeathed by Fra Fabrizio Visconti (d.1739),⁴³ and a Deposition bequeathed by Fra Gio Batta Spinola (d.1737).⁴⁴

The above-mentioned bequest by Wolfgango was received a number of years later, after the Grand Master too had died, by the executors of Vilhena's *dispropriamento*. Wolfgango's gift, a painting of St Philip the Apostle, was presented to the new Grand Master, Ramon Despuig, as acknowledgement for a favour granted by his predecessor.⁴⁵ Despuig (1736 – 1741) was the recipient of another painting, St Joseph bequeathed by Fra Giovanni de Nobili (d.1737).⁴⁶ He also received a Virgin Mary with the Child Jesus and St John, bequeathed to him by Fra Fabio Visconti (d.1738).⁴⁷ In 1730, before his election to Grand Master, Despuig had been bequeathed an ivory crucifix by Fra Domenico Savini, in acknowledgment of his role as executor of the latter's *dispropriamento*.⁴⁸

Grand Master Emanuel Pinto de Fonseca (1741-1773) too accumulated a large collection of paintings that are only known from an entry in his *dispropriamento* which conversely demonstrates the authority of the *Comun Tesoro* in dispersing even a Grand Master's personal property: his 138 paintings were catalogued by Fra Antoine Favray who estimated their worth at 3,032 scudi.⁴⁹ Amongst these paintings there may have been a panel painting of Christ's Face by Albrecht Durer that was acquired by Pinto through the bequest of Fra Girolamo Statella (d.1747).⁵⁰ The Durer appears to have been exceptionally precious as it remained in the holdings

⁴¹ AOM 927, f.57: 'Lascio a Sua Em.za mio superiore per atto di benevolenza che sempre verso di lui ho avuto un quadro rappresentante nostra Sig.ra di Trapani con cistallo inanzi, e cornice dorata'.

⁴² AOM 927, f.29v: 'Lascio poi in titolo di ricognizione all'Em.mo sig.re nro Gran Maestro un crocifisso d'Avorio pendente in un quadro sopravvilluto nero, al muro nel capezzale del mio letto'.

⁴³ AOM 931 (39) No. 10, f.29v: 'All'Em.mo Sig. Gran Maestro lascio un quadro con cornice dorata rappresentante La Vergine col suo Bambino Giesu' e San Giovanni Battista, Contrassegnato dietro colla lettera A supplicando l'Em.za sua a compiacersi gradire questo picciol segno della mia ossequiosissima obediencia.'

⁴⁴ AOM 927, f.75v: 'Dovrà presentarsi al S. Em.za il Gran Maestro ... un quadretto rappresentante Gesu Languiante deposto dalla Croce'. Fra Spinola owned other works of art attributed to Antonio Molinari (1655-1704), Parodi and Mattia Preti (1613-1699), besides his own portrait by Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659-1743); all the listed paintings were bequeathed to his family.

⁴⁵ AOM 931 (43) No. 32: Fra Filippo Guglielmo Conte de Messelmode. Refer also to fn. 50 below.

⁴⁶ AOM 931 (39) No. 17, f.69v: 'Piu voglio e dichiaro che si dij in titolo di ricognizione all'Em. E Rev.mo Sig.r Gran Maestro il quadro rappresentante S. Giuseppe'.

⁴⁷ AOM 927, f.111: 'All'Em.mo e Rev.mo Sig.r Gran Maestro lascio un quadro con cornice dorata rappresentante la Vergine col suo Bambino Giesu e San Giovanni Battista, [...] supplicando l'Em.mo sua a compiacersi gradire picciol segno della mia ossequiosissima ubbidienza'.

⁴⁸ AOM 928, f.32: 'A Raimondo Despuig un crocifisso d'avorio col piedestallo d'ebano e guarnimenti d'argento'.

⁴⁹ AOM 925, f.155v: 'Introito dello Spoglio del fu' Em.o Fr D.n Emmanuele Pinto morto [...] Cento trenta otto quadri, diversi, secondo sono descritti e specificati nell'inventario di detto spoglio, stimati dal Pittore dist.to Fabrè [Favray] sc 3032 con duplicata nota del med.o Vdo Bali 3,032.—'.

⁵⁰ AOM 927, f.166: 'Lascio a sua Eminenza in ricognizione di mia ubbidienza un quadretto del volto di Christo di Alberto Duro con cornice nera e festoni dorati'. The painting, or drawing, was still in Valletta, together with a 'fine portrait of a Secretary to the Treasury, and a Virgin by [Sebastiano] Concha', at the former Treasury of the Order, at the turn of the nineteenth century; Anon., *A Description of Malta* (1801) 15-16. In the preface, the unnamed author explains that the book is a translation from French of a manuscript dated 1792, written by an anonymous traveller.

of the *Comun Tesoro* long after, seen by a visitor to Malta in 1801.⁵¹ Other paintings bequeathed to this Grand Master held the following titles: St Philip the Apostle,⁵² Ecce Homo,⁵³ The Nativity, The Cross on Calvary, St John.⁵⁴ Other knights bequeathed paintings with the express condition that the works of art were to be chosen by the Grand Master himself.⁵⁵

Even the unpopular Grand Master Francisco Ximenes de Texada (1773-1775) was the recipient of works of art from other Hospitaller knights. A devotional painting of the Virgin Mary was bequeathed by Fra Schauenberg (d.1775), and one painting, an Our Lady of Pilar and a statue of The Virgin Mary 'similar to the one in Zaragoza', were bequeathed by his compatriot, Fra Don Miguel Doz (d.1776).⁵⁶ He also received two landscape paintings attributed to Poussin from Fra Lorenzo Chyurlia (d.1790).⁵⁷

Grand Master Emmanuel de Rohan-Polduc (1775-1797) was the recipient of an ivory statuette St Francis de Paule and an ivory Crucifix, bequeathed by the Conventual chaplain, Fra Pietro Reitano (d.1774).⁵⁸ During Rohan's reign, he received a statue of the Medici Venus, from Fra Silvio Vicentini (d.1787).⁵⁹ A contemporary account of the Palace also describes a Nativity by Trevisan displayed inside the magistral chapel.⁶⁰ The same account also lists other pieces on display inside the palace: 'The gallery of the palace contains many paintings, of which the best are a Saviour by Guido [Reni], the death of Abel (Fig. 92), by Espagnolet [Jusepe Ribera], and several by Matthias [Preti]. Here are three ancient bas-reliefs in marble, the first representing Penthesilea, Queen of the Amazonians, ..., the second represents Tullia and Claudia, ..., the

⁵¹ Anon., *A Description of Malta*, Malta, 1801, 15-16.

⁵² AOM 927, f.215v: Fra Filippo Guglielmo Conte di Messelmode e Reichstein, 'Lascio al Em.mo moderno [Pinto] un quadro rappresentante l'Apostolo S. Filippo con la sua cornice indorata'.

⁵³ AOM 931 (36) No. 22, f.213v: Fra Francesco Pappalettera (d.1759), 'Lascio a Em.o Gran M.ro per memoria un piccolo quadro rappresentante l'Ecce Homo che supplico umilmente gradire in controsegno benché debbole del mio dovere.'

⁵⁴ AOM 931 (36) No. 31, f.268: Comm. Fra D. Ettore Marulli (d. 1763), 'Lascio a S.A.Em.a il Sig. Gran Maestro di mia R.ne li tre quadri che sono nella mia stanza di letto, cioè la Nascita del Sig.re, l'altra la Crocefissione di Sig. Nel Calvario e l'ultimo di S. Gio con cornice dorate per mia memoria e venerazione'.

⁵⁵ Pinto enjoyed the choice of one of the best paintings from the collection of Fra Don Giacomo Garofalo (d.1766), through the latter's bequest: 'Lascio a S.A. Em.a un de' migliori quadri, che si troverà nel mio spoglio con supplicarlo umilmente degnarsi volerlo aggradire per minimo segno di mia riconoscenza e della mia ossequia osservanza.' AOM 931 (36) No. 15, f.131v. Pinto was also invited to choose a painting from the collection of Fra Antonio Grisella (d.1761); AOM 931 (38) No. 18, f.57v: 'Di più a Sua Altezza Ser.ma in segno della sua filiale ubidienza e venerazione come suo veneratis.mo superior gli lascio un quadro da scegliersi a' suo beneplacito.'

⁵⁶ AOM 931 (10) No. 3, f.32: 'Dexo al Em.mo Ser.mo Sn Gran Maestro la Virgen del Pilar de Maroneria que le suplico aceptar por acto de veneracion respeto y obediencia, y tambien por ser la estatua de la Virgen Igual a la de Zaragoza, y aver estado nueve dias en la Santa Capilla'. The second painting may refer to Our Lady of the Pillar, whose shrine is in the Basilica of Zaragoza.

⁵⁷ AOM 928, f.131v: 'Primariamente dispongo ... de due quadri rappresentanti due paesaggi del Posini ... che i miei signori esecutori compiaceranno presentare a S. Em.a in attestato di rispetto ossequio e per pegno di sincerissimo affetto alle sue virtù dovuto.'

⁵⁸ AOM 931 (37) No. 24 f.96: 'Supplico al S.E. il Sig. Fr. M.ro di gradire una statuette d'avorio rappresentante S. Francesco di paola, in attestato di mia dovuta gratitudine e ossequio'. AOM 927, f.355: 'Lascio a detta Sua A. Em.a un crocifisso di Avolio con suo pedestallo da presentarsi dai miei infrascritti esecutori con supplicarlo umilmente degnarsi di gradire per un minimo segno della mia riconoscenza e di mia ossequiosa osservanza.'

⁵⁹ AOM 928, f.43: 'A Sua Em.za la statua che ho in segretaria rappresentante la Venere dei Medici in contrassegno del mio affetto ed in memoria della profonda venerazione che ho avuto sempre per Em.za Sua'.

⁶⁰ Anon., *A Description of Malta, with a sketch of its history and that of its fortifications, translated from the Italian, with notes, by an Officer resident on the Island, Malta, 1801*, 17.

third represents Zenobia ... In the private halls of the Grand master (in which is a library remarkable for a fine collection of works as well as some beautiful designs [drawings]) is to be found a letter in the hand writing of King Henry the fourth, placed with a portrait of him in a frame.' Other archival documents similarly indicate that the Grand Master owned a 'cabinet' of treasures: in a letter from Rohan to the United States ambassador to France, Benjamin Franklin, the Grand Master acknowledged receipt of a medal that was sent to him in gratitude for the assistance given by the Order in the War of Independence, writing 'This monument [medal] of American Liberty has a distinguished place in my Cabinet'.⁶¹

Grand Master Ferdinand von Hompesch (1797-1798) was bequeathed a miniature Virgin Mary in a silver filigree frame, given by Fra Bartolommeo Arezzo (d.1797).⁶² Hompesch was the last Grand Master to reside in the magistral palace, having accepted the surrender of Malta to Napoleon's troops, and in 1798 he departed from the Islands with only a few treasures from the Conventual church, accompanied by loyal Hospitaller knights. He thus left the Order's property in Malta intact, including the magistral art collection, to be enjoyed by the new French governor.

The above-mentioned information on the works of art accrued by the magistral collection in different reigns, has been derived principally from archival documents, particularly Hospitaller *dispropriamenti*. The Grand Masters whose works of art have been included in this survey owe their mention due to their specific inclusion in the *dispropriamenti*, whereas the remaining Grand Masters' involvement in the magistral art collection has not been discussed.

Other documents, such as magistral despatches to Rome, mention the existence of a collection of art objects, as well as jewels, as early as the late sixteenth century, accumulated by Grand Master Verdalle with the intention of enriching the Order through his personal efforts.⁶³ Additional information can be derived from the earliest known inventory of paintings inside the Palace which was drawn up in 1823, and listed 195 paintings, of which only sixteen were executed after 1798.⁶⁴ Furthermore, later accounts from the nineteenth century attest to the continued existence of a 'cabinet' of treasures inside the Palace, such as the 1874 description

⁶¹ Papers of the Continental Congress 1774-89, numbered series M247, PCC 82, vol. II, f.432 *et seq.*, National Archives and Records Service Washington DC, quoted in Paul Cassar, *Early relations between Malta and the United States of America*, Malta, 1976, 4-5. I thank Giovanni Bonello for bringing this reference to my attention.

⁶² AOM 928, f.133: '*Lascio per memoria a S.A. Ema per contrassegno di mio rispetto un quadretto di filigrano d'argento con l'immagine di Maria Vergine dentro un cassettino*'.

⁶³ Arch. Vat. Malta 5 (Despatches of Mons. Dell'Armi, December 1593) as quoted in Elizabeth Schemerhorn, *Malta of the Knights*, New York, 1929, 145: '[On the accumulation of the fortune accruing to the Religion at the death of Grand Master Verdalle, including] his art objects, the "robba" in the treasure-room of the Palace tower – the vases, ornaments, silver, furniture, tapestries, precious stuffs'. The jewels in Verdalle's collection were listed in Barb. Lat. 5327, Letter to the Doge of Venice, quoted in Schemerhorn, *Malta of the Knights*, 145.

⁶⁴ NAM Duplicate Despatches Vol III, Despatch dated 14 March 1823. The list was compiled in 1823 by the Maltese artist, Giorgio Pullicino (1779-1851), and published three years later, in 1826. The list is hereafter referred to as Schiavone, *I Tesori del Palazzo Magistrale*.

given by Samuel Cowdy: 'a private cabinet containing a fine collection, with many beautiful designs. From library shelves, antiquated boxes, and other hiding places, a search might discover valuable coins, medals, and inscriptions, with other remarkable treasures, illustrative of history far beyond that of the knights and the confines of Malta.'⁶⁵ An undated album manuscript from the second half of the eighteenth century,⁶⁶ with water-colour and gouache drawings illustrates the precious stones, miniature sculptures and other miniature architectural ornaments which were embedded or added to a structure termed a 'Deser'.⁶⁷ The pieces are shaped to appear like inlaid parts, while others are shaped as miniature urns and columns, and are suggestive of precious stones and marble with which a cabinet of curiosities would be decorated. The album also includes drawings of antique sculptures and busts, and includes a small scale version of the Farnese Hercules.⁶⁸ Another account describes the Grand Master's private museum as a 'fine collection of works, as well as some beautiful designs [drawings]'.⁶⁹ The same account also mentions the 'cabinet' of Comm. Dolomieu as worthy of attention.⁷⁰

4.2 Auberges and other Hospitaller residences

The practices in art collecting which were observed by pages, Grand Crosses and other Hospitaller knights in the magistral court were imitated within those courtiers' palatial residences. Magistral courtiers who attended on the Grand Master did not reside at the Palace, but lived in their own *palazzi* inside Valletta, or rented their residence from amongst the many properties that were owned by their langue.⁷¹ Like their counterparts in other courts in Europe, magistral courtiers were in a position to act as 'focal points in different neighbourhoods, while simultaneously serving as secondary centres of diplomacy, cultural patronage and religious life.'⁷² They would also own a summer residence close to the magistral home at San Anton Palace, 'enveloping the [magistral] palace with a veritable galaxy of satellite residences'.⁷³ Key

⁶⁵ Cowdy, 'Malta and its Knights', 403.

⁶⁶ NLM, Libr. Ms 552, *Dimostrazione dei pezzi del Palazzo del Gran Maestro: Dimostrazione di tutti quei pezzi di pietra ricevuti da Sua Ecc.za, e messi in opera nel Deser, come meglio si fa' vedere tanto dal suo conto, quanto dalli disegni, ne quali vi sono de cifre correspondent per indicazione di facilmente rincontrarli*.

⁶⁷ A 'Deser' by Luigi Valadier was once the property of Balì de Breteuil when Ambassador in Rome. It was sold to Catherine II in 1777. Its description does not ascribe any function to the 'beautiful artifice' though it was lavishly adorned; A. Gonzales-Palacio, 'I Deser del Balì di Breteuil', in *L'Oro di Valadier – Un Genio nella Roma del Settecento* exhibition catalogue, ed. by A. Gonzales-Palacio, Villa Medici 1997, 210.

⁶⁸ This sculpture is in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples.

⁶⁹ Anon., *A Description of Malta*, 17 – 18.

⁷⁰ Anon., *A Description of Malta*, 17: 'Two private cabinets, the one belonging to Sig. Barbaro, and the other to the commandante de Dolomieu, merit also the attention of the traveller. Sig. Barbaro, who to extensive erudition adds that modesty and complaisance which enhances the value of its communication, possesses a variety of curiosities in medals and stones. Mons de Dolomieu has preserved in a house, charmingly situated, many valuable collections belonging to natural history, and particularly to that of Volcanos, his works on which are so justly admired.'

⁷¹ Houses purchased by knights would form part of their *spoglio*. At their death, houses and estates on the continent would be annexed to the nearest commandery, whereas those in Malta would accrue to the deceased knight's langue, and by the mid-seventeenth century to the Treasury. Vertôt, *Histoire des Chevaliers Hospitaliers*, II, 151.

⁷² Malcolm Smuts and George Gorse, 'Introduction', in *The Politics of Space: European courts c.1500-1750* ed. by M. Fantoni, G. Gorse and M. Smuts, Rome, 2009, 30-31.

⁷³ Smuts and Gorse, 'Introduction', 30-31.

personages of the Order, such as Giovanni Battista Spinola and Mario Bichi built magnificent palaces outside Valletta (Fig. 93, Fig. 94), on prominent parts of the Maltese landscape.

By the mid-seventeenth century, high-ranking knights, such as Priors and Grand Crosses, who held ambitions for the magistral title, would demonstrate their capacity for accumulating a magnificent art collection in fashioning themselves as suitable candidates to be elected to the headship of the Order. The splendor of the residence of Martin de Redin (1657-1660) was a factor in the run-up to his election as Grand Master, as a gathering place for his many friends from all the langues, whom he entertained.⁷⁴ In his previous role as Prior of Navarre and Viceroy of Sicily, at around 1656 de Redin was instrumental in bringing the Neapolitan artist and knight, Fra Mattia Preti in contact with the Order in Malta, by commissioning the artist to embellish the Chapel of St George of the Langue of Aragon. The success of this commission led to the artist carrying out the project for the entire Conventual church and his subsequent stay in Malta.⁷⁵

Other 'public' Hospitaller sites for the display of art collections were the eight *auberges* of the Order in Valletta,⁷⁶ where novices and young knights resided. The eight *langues* administered their own assets autonomously from the *Comun Tesoro* which merely supervised the eight administrations. Among the assets of a *langue* were various works of art. The presence of works of art within the *auberges* is suggested by instances of art commissions or legacies willed by the *auberges*' respective commanders and piliers. Knights shared a sense of loyalty to their *langue*, that was publicly manifested in their bequests to their respective chapel inside the Conventual church, and in the architectural magnificence of their respective *auberge*. Yet their loyalty to their *langue* came second to the Religion and the Pope. In a period when collective identity was not yet defined in terms of nationhood, Hospitaller knights lived and died within the structures of the religious community,⁷⁷ as opposed to the complementary system that was defined by dynastic rule. In his survey of Hospitaller works of art in the Order's buildings, John Gash stated that, 'the subject-matter, symbolism, and socio-political function of images are indeed an important area of study, not least in Hospitaller Malta, where ideology and myth

⁷⁴ '[De Redin] s'havera acquistato un grosso capital d'Amici, massime nelle due lingue di Spagna, & in generale usando con tutti splendidezza, e galanteria, aperta la Casa all'conversatione di tutte le Nazioni, con trattamenti di giuoco, e di conviti crebbe molto di reputatione.' Bartolommeo del Pozzo, *Historia della Sacra Religione Militare di S. Giovanni Gerosolimitano detta di Malta*, I, Venice, 1715, 3.

⁷⁵ Preti executed a small bust-portrait of Grand Master de Redin, of a size and style that suggests its display in a private setting or, as has been suggested by John T. Spike, its purpose to inform the sculptor of De Redin's bust within the funerary monument inside St John's. Spike, *Preti: Catalogue Raisonné*, 126.

⁷⁶ The eight auberges belonged to the Langues of France, Provence, Auvergne, Italy, Castille Leon and Portugal, Aragon, Germany, and Anglo-Bavaria. Five of the auberges are still standing, while the German one made way for the building of the Protestant Cathedral in 1839 and those of France and Auvergne were destroyed as a result of bombing during WWII.

⁷⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 20-28. Anderson identifies the cultural roots of nationhood in the sacred communities bound by a common religion mediated through a sacred language (e.g. Latin, Classical Arabic) and written script (e.g. Bible, Koran); its counterpart was the dynastic realm, in a political system that derived its legitimacy from divinity. The decline of the sacral monarchy started in the seventeenth century, and was completely obsolete by 1789.

become ever more finely integrated into the fabric of society and its mechanisms of organisation and control'.⁷⁸

The *auberges* in Valletta were thus embellished with works of art which were bequeathed to the *Langue* to which the deceased knight belonged. The church linked to the *auberge* would also occasionally be the beneficiary of endowments and occasionally receive devotional works of art. The *Langue* of Italy received two portraits – 'Pope Benedict XIV', and 'Cardinal Arguiglieres' – through the bequest of Fra Francesco Pappalettera, who expressed the wish that the paintings be placed in the Grand Hall of the Auberge of Italy.⁷⁹ Fra Don Giacomo Garofalo (d.1766) bequeathed a Blessed Virgin embellished with gold and silver attachments to the Church of St Catherine, of the *Langue* of Italy.⁸⁰ In 1692, the Auberge of Castille and Leon was the recipient of a Portrait of Grand Master Martin de Redin, bequeathed by the Grand Prior of Navarre, Fra Don Martin de Novar (d. 1692).⁸¹ The *Langue* of Germany was bequeathed a number of un-named portraits by the Prior of Dacia, Fra Ermanno Baron de Beveren (d.1736).⁸² The French *auberges* had prominently displayed two portraits by Antoine Favray of two of its most famous knights who became distinguished Grand Masters. Both paintings are now on display inside the Palace. Grand Master Jean de Vallette (Fig. 154) was displayed inside the *auberge* of Provence,⁸³ and was taken out for display over the *auberge* entrance during the 1765 bicentenary celebrations of the Knights' victory over the Ottoman Turks.⁸⁴ The second portrait Grand Master Philippe Villiers de l'Isle Adam taking possession of Mdina (Fig. 40) was displayed inside the *auberge* of France, together with another large painting, the Conversion of St Paul, attributed to the Maltese artist Giuseppe d'Arena.⁸⁵

The *Camerata*, located close to the *Sacra Infermeria* in Valletta, was another residence for Hospitaller knights. It was established in 1593 as a home of spiritual retreat for those knights who wished to seclude themselves in a life of contemplation and the fulfillment of their religious vows. The *Camerata* had its own collection of works of art, and was the recipient of

⁷⁸ Gash, 'Painting and Sculpture in Early Modern Malta', 511.

⁷⁹ AOM 931 (36) No. 22, f.213v: 'Lascio all V.da Lingua d'Italia li Ritratti della Sta mem.a di Benedetto XIV e del fu Em.o Sig. Cardinale Arguiglieres affinché siano posti alla gran sala del med.ma.'

⁸⁰ AOM 931 (36) No. 15, f.131v: 'Lascio all Ven. Chiesa di Sta Caterina di detta Ven.da Lingua d'Italia il quadro rappresentante L'Immagine della B.ma Vergine come attualmente si trova ornate con tutti l'ori ed argenti.'

⁸¹ AOM 931 (3) No. 31, f.305v: 'Il Ritratto dell'Emm.mo Redin dipinto armato, desidero, che si tenghi appeso nel Ven.do Priorato di Navarra, senza levarsi da quel luogo e prego alli SS. Cav.ri abitanti nelle case del med.mo Ven.do Priorato d'haverne qualche cura.... Al Sag. Anziano dell'Accennato Ven.do Priorato di Navarra, che si ritrovera' qui in convento, prego che si contenti tenere appresso di se, senza poter alienare, il ritratto del sopranom.to Emin.mo Redin vestito da Gran Mro con robba negra, come parimente tenera il libro, quale serve per conferire alli novizij l'habito dell'ordine nostro.' Also, refer to Chapter V, 'Further findings from the archive'.

⁸² AOM 927, f.51v: 'Li ritratti li lascio all'Albergo d'Allemagna.'

⁸³ F.E. de Saint-Priest, *Malte par un voyageur françois*, II, Malta, 1791, 88: 'On offre ce jour-la [8 September] aux regards & a la veneration due peuple le beau portrait du G M la Vallette, qui appartient a la Langue de Provence e qui a été peint par M le Comm Favray.'

⁸⁴ Saint-Priest, *Malte par un voyageur françois*, 88, 90.

⁸⁵ Saint-Priest, *Malte par un voyageur françois*, 90: 'On voit dans l'Auberge de la Langue de France deu beaux tableaux, l'un representant la Conversion de Saint Paul, par Giuseppe d'Arpino, & l'autre l'entree du G M L'Isleadam a Malte, par M le comm. Favray.' Emmanuel Fiorentino re-attributed the portrait to d'Arena; Fiorentino, 'Portraits and Other Easel Paintings at the Palace', 210 fn.7.

bequests which included paintings such as the Holy Virgin of Trapani bequeathed by Fra Gio. de Nobili (d.1737).⁸⁶ One other painting of note in the *Camerata* was a full-length Our Lord in the Orchard attributed to Mattia Preti (Fig. 95), possibly a direct commission to the artist by the confraternity of Hospitaller knights who wished to restore the building in 1685.⁸⁷ The paintings may have been displayed in the *Camerata* chapel, which was embellished with walnut benches and hangings in antique green silk woven with gold threads and that included a Virgin and Child displayed beneath the Agony in the Garden.⁸⁸

Another residential building with its own art collection, including a series of portraits of the Hospitaller saints, was the Wignacourt College of Chaplains of the Order of St John located close to the Grotto of St Paul, a sacred site in Rabat (Fig. 96). As a residential college for the Order's religious knights, its embellishment may have had the same attention as the *auberges*, and included a series of full-length portraits of the Order's Saints and Blesseds.⁸⁹ Future studies on the art collection of the Chaplains College may reveal an interesting case study that illustrates the impact of the counter-reformation on the Order's religious programme as shown by the increased prominence given to the Order's saints in the early seventeenth century.

Finally, the *Sacra Infermeria*, or the Hospital of the Order in Valletta, as well as other smaller hospitals such as Santo Spirito in Rabat also had paintings and sculptures displayed in key locations. In 1698, during a courtesy visit to the *Sacra Infermeria*, the Russian ambassador Sheremetev remarked on its organization and appearance as well as on the embellishment of its huge halls with paintings.⁹⁰ In 1798, Claude Robert, a physician who accompanied the French troops in Malta, ordered the removal of the paintings on display inside the *Sacra Infermeria* as a measure against the spread of disease.⁹¹ This suggests that the collection of paintings at the hospital were numerous, and that they may have been displayed for therapeutic purposes, albeit for reasons based on practices that were outdated by the end of the eighteenth century. Alternatively, Robert's instructions may suggest that the paintings were in a poor state, with disintegrating paint layers that were thought to be harmful to patients.

The *Sacra Infermeria* once housed the large painting by Mattia Preti, SS Cosmas and Damian (Fig. 97) that had been commissioned for the Holy Infirmary by Prior Pierre Viani (d.1698).⁹²

⁸⁶ AOM 931 (39) No. 17, f.69v: 'Piu dichiaro e voglio che il quadro lungo rappresentante la Vergine Ss.ma di Trapani resta nella Casa della Camerata in adempi dell'obbligo'.

⁸⁷ Giovanni Bonello, 'Mattia Preti: Painting for a murderer and other stories', in *Art in Malta: Discoveries and Recoveries*, Malta, 1999, 76-79.

⁸⁸ AOM 1953, f.217.

⁸⁹ The collection of portraits of the Order's Saints and Blesseds are discussed in Chapters III and VII.

⁹⁰ Giovanni Bonello, 'Sheremetev's visit to Malta in 1698', in *Histories of Malta IV: Convictions and Conjectures*, Malta, 2003, 74. Sheremetev's journal of his trip was published by his son Piotr Borissovich in Moscow in 1773, and later published in French in 1859: Boyard Boris Petrovitch Cheremetef, *Journal du Voyage du Boyard Boris Petrovitch Cheremetef a Cracovie, Venise, Rome et Malta, 1697-1699*, transl. by Augustin Galitzin, Paris, 1859.

⁹¹ Charles Savona-Ventura, *Knights Hospitaller Medicine in Malta*, Malta, 2004, 296

⁹² Cutajar, *St John's Church*, 120. The painting is now displayed in the Museum of St John's Co-cathedral.

Three known copies of this painting may have been commissioned by Hospitaller knights.⁹³ One copy has been attributed to Manuel Pereira (d.1693), while another copy, dated 1728, bears the arms of Grand Master Vilhena. Also, thirteen other paintings, portraying Apostle Saints and devotional themes, were displayed in the Hospital, while a Holy Family was displayed in its chapel.⁹⁴ Another hospital, Santo Spirito,⁹⁵ displayed the *sacra conversazione*-style painting Grand Master Caraffa and the Coronation of the Virgin (Fig. 98) by Manuel Pereira (d.1693).

In addition to the archival and documentary evidence of a magistral art collection and other paintings that were known to be displayed inside the Order's other buildings, one may also add the primary evidence of those works of art which remained inside the Palace (Fig. 99, Fig. 100) and in Malta up to the second half of the twentieth century, when the National Museum of Fine Arts was inaugurated. Several paintings which were transferred from the Palace, and from the *auberges*, are mainly of a secular nature, predominantly landscapes or portraits, as well as a few history paintings or still lifes. Initially, this would appear to contradict the findings of the archival information and to undermine a comparative study. On the other hand, a more comprehensive study may be achieved by adding the archival information to the material evidence that is still present, thereby arriving at a more complete understanding of the Order's art collections.

4.3 Summation

One key finding from this exercise demonstrates that the collections on display inside the Palace and the *auberges* comprised works of art of both religious and secular genres. With respect to the magistral art collection, the following appear to be the main qualities that emerge from this aggregate. Firstly, the richness and variety of the collection depended on the sources that were available to Grand Masters, that were mainly individual Hospitaller art collections which were sold off by the *Comun Tesoro* and, to a much smaller degree, artists' studios overseas as favoured by the Order's ambassadors and representatives, in the main artistic centres of Europe. Few were those Grand Masters whose appreciation of paintings and sculpture led to their direct involvement in seeking out new works of art for the magistral collection.

A second observable quality is the cumulative integrity of the magistral collection. Some themes stand out by their absence from the above-mentioned compilation, such as paintings of nude figures or works of art on pagan or mythological themes, while such subjects are known to have

⁹³ All three form part of the national collection of Malta and bear the inventory numbers 1183, 1185 and 11583.

⁹⁴ The paintings are only known from the catalogue of publicly-owned works of art compiled and published in the late nineteenth century. Lintorn-Simmons, *The Governor's Palaces*, 182-183.

⁹⁵ A Maltese hospital set that was functioning by 1372 and originally named the Hospital of St Francis. Its name was changed to Santo Spirito in 1433. The site now houses the National Archives of Malta.

been found in individual Hospitaller collections.⁹⁶ However such perceived ‘gaps’ may need further research in order to arrive at any conclusion on differences between the magistral collection and individual Hospitaller collections. This will require a closer scrutiny of the subsequent occupancy of the Palace during the brief French and later British period than has been possible so far.

The survey given above has been necessarily brief, but it indicates that further study with a greater focus on the magistral art collection has the potential to open up new fields of research. Studies on the behaviour by individual Grand Masters towards the magistral art collection may throw light on other perceptions of the works of art on display inside the Palace. As with the key roles played by the Grand Masters named in Chapter III, the comparatively smaller roles played by other Grand Masters may, on closer scrutiny, reveal additional information which is not manifest in the archival sources that have been the primary source of findings for this thesis. The above survey also serves as a starting point for further research on tracing the provenance of the works of art which originated in Hospitaller collections and which are today found in the national collection of Malta.

⁹⁶ On the Nude, as well as literary themes, in Hospitaller collections, refer to Chapter VII.

V: THE INVENTORIES OF HOSPITALLER KNIGHTS

5.1 The assembling and dispersal of art collections

The previous chapters have looked at the cultural influences which defined the growth of the magistral art collection, one founded on the moral and social rationale specific to Hospitaller knights and in particular to the Grand Master as the supreme representative of the Order of St John. This theoretical framework to the Order's art collecting also reflected the dynamic channels of communication linking the Order of St John in Malta with widely spread European societies, mutually informed by humanist ideals, as demonstrated through the life and writings of Fra Sabba da Castiglione.

Owing to the short-lived nature of the numerous private Hospitaller art collections, their study requires another methodology which supplements the earlier study of the singular and incremental magistral art collection enjoyed by successive Grand Masters. This chapter proceeds by discussing the nature of Hospitaller art collections through a study of the Order's statutes as manifested in the *dispropriamenti*. In particular, the statutes regulated the mechanisms by which a knight's vow of poverty permitted the usufruct, but not the ownership, of property, thereby determining the means of practising art collecting and art patronage by Hospitaller knights.

5.1.1 Hospitaller obligations: Art collecting and the vow of poverty

A fully professed Hospitaller knight took the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, promising to adhere to the regulations as defined in the Statutes of the Order. A Hospitaller knight could not sell or dispose of any of his belongings of his own free will.¹ A purchase or acquisition made by a knight was in effect added to the common wealth of the Order, of which he could only enjoy the usufruct.² One regulation established at the end of the thirteenth century obliged a knight to keep an updated inventory of his holdings, listing those objects which would accrue to the Order at his death, through the process termed the '*dispropriamento*' (dispossession and dispersal).³ One concession was that a Hospitaller knight could bequeath

¹ Giovanni Maria Caravita, *Compendio alfabetico di Statuti della Sacra Religione Gerosolimitana*, Borgo Novo, 1718, 66. On other regulations which had a direct outcome on the Order's collection of works of art, such as the systems of the *passaggio* and the *gioia* as forms of payment or gifts to the Order, refer to Chapter III.

² For alternative, and illicit, forms of acquiring possession of precious objects, and their consequences, refer Giovanni Bonello, 'Thefts by Knights of Malta in the 16th Century', in *Histories of Malta VIII, Mysteries and Myths*, Malta, 2007, 9-26. Since the thirteenth century the statutes of the Order included the general prohibitions that were incompatible with knighthood, placing theft on a par with heresy, sodomy, murder and desertion.

³ E.J. King, *The Rule, Statutes and Customs of the Hospitaller 1099-1310*, London, 1934, 188. The *dispropriamento* was first described in the 'Customs', the detailed code of regulations that were drawn up by Fra William de St Estène at the end of the thirteenth century.

gifts to the value of one-fifth of his property's value, termed the '*quinto*'.⁴ The remaining four-fifths of the deceased knight's holdings were collectively termed the '*spoglio*' (spoils).⁵ The *dispropriamento* was thereby regarded as the material enactment of the ritual despoiling and symbolic divestment of worldly goods.⁶ The division of a knight's property at his death demarcated the transformation of private possessions into communal goods and commodities to be kept or dispersed according to the purposes of the Order of St John. The Order's *Comun Tesoro* (Treasury), was responsible for the sales that followed a knight's death, thus ensuring that the *dispropriamenti* were translated into funds, as the *spoglio* was one of the more lucrative sources of income for the Order.⁷

The beginnings of the *dispropriamento* lay in the Rule,⁸ drawn up during the magistracy of Raymond du Puy (1120-1160).⁹ The Rule required members of the Order to sever themselves completely from material possessions, handing whatever they acquired to the Master in charge of administering the Order's possessions. This obligation was formalised with the Statutes enacted by Grand Master Villeneuve (1319-1346), and in view of their vow of poverty, was aimed at improving the administration of belongings of infirm brothers. Later, the Statutes enacted by Grand Master de Naillac (1396-1421) imposed the duty of drafting the *dispropriamento* on knights about to embark on a sea voyage, while those enacted by Grand Master Jean de Lastic (1454-1461), imposed this duty on knights who entered the *Sacra Infermeria* (the Hospital of the Order) for medical treatment.

Recent research on the process of the *dispropriamento*, has shown how the Order's interpretation of the vow of poverty evolved in response to changing social mores across Europe.¹⁰ Stefan Cachia observes that: 'these changes manifested themselves in the [gradual decrease in] communal life and the complementary rise in individual forms of living, both on the commanderies and in convent; By allowing individual members to have full usufruct of their belongings, the Order was responding to the patrimonial strategies of its aristocratic elite.'¹¹ The shift in emphasis was complete by the late sixteenth century. The Statutes enacted during the reign of Verdalle (1584), decreed that all goods were to be sold in favour of the *Comun*

⁴ Caravita, *Statuti*, 97-98.

⁵ Caravita, *Statuti*, 113-4.

⁶ Dominic Cutajar and Carmel Cassar, 'Budgeting in 17th Century Malta', in *Malta: Studies of Its Heritage and History*, Malta, 1986, 145.

⁷ The main source of income for the Order was through the collection of tithes from the many Hospitaller estates in Europe.

⁸ The first manuscript copies of the Order's statutes have varying titles depending on the language, namely *Statuta*, *Ordinationes*, as well as *Costituzioni*. Information kindly provided by Maroma Camilleri, Archivist, National Library of Malta. 'The Rule' encompasses the early customs and later statutes and is preferred by British authors.

⁹ King, *The Rule*, 20.

¹⁰ Cachia, *The Treasury*, 251. Another recent study on the *dispropriamenti* is that by Isabella C. Grima, *An investigation of l'Arte dello speziale in Baroque Malta: a study of the spogli of members of the Order of St John* (unpublished master's dissertation, University of Malta, 2005). As a study on medical practices in Hospitaller Malta the findings hold little relevance to the subject under discussion.

¹¹ Cachia, *The Treasury*, 251.

Tesoro which also held the archive arising out of the *dispropriamento*.¹² ‘By the start of the sixteenth century, Christian ethical concepts inspiring the language of the statutes disappeared from the later statutes, their place being taken over by more technical, precise legal terminology. [This can be observed in] the language employed in the statute enacted under Grand Master Pierre d’Aubusson (1476-1503) concerning the payment of dues to the Treasury [that] contrasts sharply with the phraseology of Du Puy’s [1120-1160] Rule.’¹³

5.2 The archive comprising the *Dispropriamenti*

The various documents which were written, and subsequently compiled to form the *dispropriamento* archive, are the primary source for this study on Hospitaller art collections, informing on one aspect of the material culture of the religious and military Order of St John. This systematic study of the archival source constitutes a new methodology for examining the parameters of Hospitaller art collecting and patronage, within the context of the Order’s statutory regulations. This methodology is also applied to understanding the substance of Hospitaller art collecting and patronage revealed in the content of inventories and in the nuances of bequests.

In researching the archive, it was noted that the various inventories comprised lists of works of art, books as well as arms and armour, while no visibility was given to other types of collections such as coins, antiquities, curiosities and natural history collections. The latter remain unstated, and subsequently unacknowledged, in the inventories that were drawn up by Hospitaller knights. Conversely, the distinction which appears to have been reserved for works of art, books as well as arms and armour appears to confirm the Hospitaller archetype that was devised in the writings of Fra Sabba da Castiglione.¹⁴ There also appears to be only one instance of a direct relationship between the textual evidence contained within the *dispropriamento* archive, and the primary evidence of the extant paintings that once formed part of the magistral art collection and are still to be found in Malta.¹⁵ The small painting Sophonisba receiving a message from Massinissa (Fig. 103) displayed at the National Museum of Fine Arts bears the coat of arms of Fra Mario Bichi on the back of the canvas,¹⁶ and corresponds to the gift made by the knight in 1709 to Comm., later Grand Master, Marc’Antonio Zondadari (1720-1722),

¹² Caravita, *Statuti*, 42.

¹³ Cachia, *The Treasury*, 56.

¹⁴ Refer to Chapter III.

¹⁵ The majority of these paintings are held at the National Museum of Fine Arts in Malta; Cutajar, *Museum of Fine Arts*, 6.

¹⁶ Museum Annual Report 1932-33, p.xiii, report by Vincenzo Bonello, Curator of Fine Art: ‘At the back, this picture bears a seal with the coat of arms of Bichi on a Maltese cross, and a monogram unpressed on the frame work with the initials F.M.B. (Fra Mario Bichi?)’. The painting was purchased from a private collection in Malta in 1932. Refer to Chapter I for an account of the dispersal of Hospitaller works of art after the Order’s departure from Malta in 1798.

described in the *dispropriamento* as ‘a small painting depicting the moment after Sophonisba read a letter and asked for a cup of poison before leaving to become a prisoner of war’.¹⁷ In its singularity, this example stands out from the thousands of paintings that are listed in nearly three centuries of Hospitaller inventories yet which have remained untraced. This example eloquently demonstrates the need for supplementary research to connect the two as yet distinct forms of primary material.

5.2.1 *The archival sources*

The volumes containing the *dispropriamento* documents are titled ‘*Dispropriamenti*’. The majority of these documents are kept in forty-four volumes that form part of the archive of the Sovereign Military Order of St John, housed in the National Library of Malta, in Valletta.¹⁸ A number of *dispropriamenti* are also found in the Archives of the Cathedral of Malta in Mdina. This was the result of changes in administrative arrangements agreed between the French government of Malta and the Maltese ecclesiastical authorities in 1798.¹⁹ Altogether, the 2,393 *dispropriamenti* found in Maltese archives relate to knights who lived in Malta, together with some copies of documents relating to knights, commanders and priors who lived away from Malta, ‘*fuori convento*’, in the several commanderies and priories belonging to the Order. The *dispropriamenti* of knights who died overseas, provide additional information on the mechanisms that regulated the acquisition and dispersal of works of art in Malta. The majority of these documents were kept in their respective priories.²⁰

The *dispropriamenti* in Mdina span the years 1549 to 1772, in a total of thirty-two volumes made up of 745 sets of documents, each set relating to the *dispropriamento* of a single Hospitaller knight.²¹ The sheets are held as loose groups of documents kept together as volumes in chronological order. Each group represents the last part of the *dispropriamento* process of the dispersal of those belongings that make up the four-fifths of a knight’s belongings that accrued to the Order’s Treasury and are titled ‘*Sentenze degli spogli*’. The Mdina volumes were

¹⁷ AOM 931 (34) No. 23, f. 168v: ‘*All’Ill.mo Sig. Comm.de fra Marco Antonio Zondadari lascio per memoria un quadro picciolo con la rappresentazione quando Sofonisba doppo letta la letter domanda la Tzza del Veleno prima che andar prigionie di guerra*’. The gift formed part of Bichi’s *quinto*, written in April 1707 and executed after his death in Malta in December 1711.

¹⁸ The volumes within which the archives are bound have the prefix AOM – ‘Archivum Ordinem Melitense’, or ‘Archive of the Order of Malta’. A catalogue is only available online: <http://www.hmml.org/research08/catalogue/mss_search.asp> (City: Valletta; Library: National Library of Malta).

¹⁹ The volumes within which the archives are bound have the prefix ACM – Archives of the Cathedral of Malta - Joseph Galea, *An Inventory of the Manuscript Volumes of the “Spoils” (1549-1772) preserved at the Cathedral Museum, Mdina – Malta*, Minnesota, 1988.

²⁰ Some copies were made for the Order’s records in Malta and are bound with the respective *langue*’s volume of *dispropriamenti*. The *dispropriamenti* that were kept in priorates may be traced in various national and regional archival deposits throughout Europe.

²¹ The volumes are ACM (1) to (32), titled *Sentenze*.

transferred to the Cathedral in the first months of the French government of Malta,²² and do not include any documents relating to the *quinto*.

The archive in Valletta holds a greater number of *dispropriamenti*, ranging chronologically from 1602 to 1807 in forty-four bound volumes that altogether combine 1,648 sets of documents.²³ They are numbered in groups according to *langue*.²⁴ These documents represent the dispossession and dispersal of all of a knight's belongings, that is, those belongings that accrued to the Order, forming part of the *spoglio* (four-fifths) as well as those belongings that were bequeathed according to a knight's stated wishes, forming part of the *quinto* (one-fifth). All the Valletta *dispropriamenti* are bound in chronological order.²⁵

Volumes one to eleven are titled *Dispropriamenti Spagnuoli* and include those *dispropriamenti* of knights from the two Spanish languages, that of Aragon, and that of Castille and Portugal. Volumes twelve to twenty-seven are titled *Dispropriamenti Francesi* and combine the *dispropriamenti* of knights from the three French languages, that is, France, Auvergne, and Provence. Volumes twenty-eight to forty-two are titled *Dispropriamenti Italiani* combining those from the langue of Italy. The Italian volumes also include *dispropriamenti* of knights who hailed from North and East European territories which, following the Reformation, did not have a fully operational langue. Volume number forty-three contains *dispropriamenti* belonging to knights from the two German languages, Allemand and Baviere, while volume forty-four combines a mixture of *dispropriamenti* from different langues between 1675 and 1798. Several *dispropriamenti* are also kept in a different sequence of six volumes, occasionally revealing some that are duplicates of *dispropriamenti* found in the ones divided by *langue*.²⁶ The *dispropriamenti* of the Grand Masters are grouped separately in three volumes titled '*Eminentissimi*'.²⁷

5.2.2 The structure and contents of the *dispropiamento*

Each *dispropiamento* is a compilation of the documents which describe a Hospitaller knight's property and assets as well as his debts.²⁸ The documents are written by different hands, indicating their status as original documents, not as copies. As a consequence, the volumes are a

²² This may have been part of the strategy devised by the Order's *uditore*, Gaetano Bruno, to protect the archive of the Order from destruction by order from the French Commission of Government. Bruno dragged his feet on undertaking the order to give up the documents, which were ordered to be made into cartridges for the artillery. Testa, *The French in Malta*, 226-7.

²³ The volumes are AOM 931 (1) to (44).

²⁴ Ref to Chapter I for a description of the eight *langues* of the Order of St John.

²⁵ The volumes are catalogued as AOM 931 (volume number). Throughout this thesis the individual *dispropiamento* is referred to in the following way: AOM 931 (volume number) No. [*dispropiamento* number] e.g. AOM 931 (31) No. 16, referring to the *dispropiamento* of Fra Gio Batta Brancaccio.

²⁶ AOM 927 'G', and 'H', AOM 928, AOM 929, AOM 948, AOM 949.

²⁷ AOM 924, AOM 925 and AOM 926.

²⁸ Although Italian was the language spoken by all Hospitallers, the documents are sometimes written in another language, either Latin, French or, Spanish. Maltese was rarely used.

compilation of manuscript sheets in various sizes, with widely varying calligraphy. Some *dispropriamenti* were drawn up for reasons other than the imminent prospect of death, such as when a Hospitaller knight would be elected to a pastoral role within the Church. In such instances, the *dispropriamento* only governed the assets enjoyed by knights during the Hospitaller phase of their life, before their election within the Church.²⁹ One such *dispropriamento*, held in 1703, was that of the Spanish knight Fra Emmanuele Arias (1638-1717) which included over seventy paintings.³⁰ This was occasioned by the obligation to relinquish his title as Hospitaller knight, before taking up the archbishopric of Seville. Another instance of a *dispropriamento*, which occurred for different reasons, took place in 1779. A loose manuscript³¹ records an auction of the belongings and furnishings of Fra Giuseppe Raiberti, who left the Order for unknown reasons. His *dispropriamento* marks that moment of departure, while giving an insight into the kind of belongings kept by a Hospitaller knight.³²

With respect to *dispropriamenti* drawn up by moribund knights, works of art would be described either as part of the *quinto*, as bequeathed paintings or sculptures, or as part of the *soglio*, in the inventory of that knight's belongings. In some other instances, one also finds claims by artists for works of art that remained unpaid, amongst notes that were drafted by a knight's creditors, claiming moneys owed as part of services rendered before his death; these notes would be found with others, such as a doctor's fees, an apothecary's medicines, or servants' wages. The documents are written in varying levels of detail, ranging from the hastily drafted single paragraph at one's deathbed, to documents that would have been scripted over a number of years.

The majority of documents describe the knight's holdings of gold and silver medals, jewellery, tableware, candleholders and other objects, as well as their items of clothing. The manner in which they are listed in the *dispropriamenti*, clearly indicates that these objects were prized for their utility over their aesthetic merit. Such belongings were regarded as commodities with monetary worth that could be sold by the Order's Treasury within the norms of a market society.

With respect to works of art in the *dispropriamenti*, their listing is less frequent, with some noteworthy absences. Knights who were known to be art patrons such as Fra Balì Jacques de Cordon d'Evieu (d. 1682)³³ and Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt (d.1622) did not include any

²⁹ Caravita, *Statuti*, 50-51.

³⁰ AOM 931 (4) No.9, f.73 – 114v.

³¹ The manuscript is currently only known from a photocopy in the Museum of the Order of St John, London.

³² Toffolo, 'A Maltese Auction of 1779', 109-119.

³³ AOM 929 f.6. Balì d'Evieu had his portrait painted by Pierre Mignard (1612-1695). The portrait is signed and dated 'P.Mignard pinxit 1653', and is currently on display inside the National Museum of Fine Arts, Valletta. It once formed part the magistral art collection, acquired from the *Comun Tesoro*, as is seen by the inscription on the back of the canvas 'Del Comun Tesoro'. Cutajar, *Museum of Fine Arts*, 37.

paintings or sculptures in their inventories.³⁴ Those documents that do include paintings reveal uneven levels of detail that range from the nominal mention,³⁵ to the descriptive list, complete with titles and dimensions of paintings.³⁶ The inconsistency in the *dispropriamenti* may be due to the circumstances in which such documents were drawn up. However a further implication may be suggested, namely that the ownership of works of art provided an extraordinary dimension to the profile of a knight of the Order of St John, at variance with the ownership norms of otherwise tightly-regulated belongings. This aspect is discussed at greater length in Chapter VII, in a study of the relationship between art collections and the self-fashioning of a Hospitaller knight's identity.

Another extraordinary element, within the documentation, lies in the bequests that were granted by the Grand Masters, owing to the occasional mention of '*Lo Stato del Palazzo*' as beneficiary. The existence of *dispropriamenti* belonging to some Grand Masters confirms that they too only retained the facility of usufruct over belongings that would accrue to the Order's *Comun Tesoro*. In their case, the situation is less clear than that with respect to Hospitaller knights. In effect, Grand Masters could enjoy their predecessors' assets. Others also extended their magistral authority to claim other objects belonging to Hospitallers who had just died, such as gold and silver, when these should have been kept by the *Comun Tesoro* to raise funds.³⁷ The *Comun Tesoro* was occasionally successful in taking ownership of the personal belongings of a deceased Grand Master: the sale of 138 paintings which belonged to Grand Master Pinto de Fonseca (d.1773) raised 3,032 scudi.³⁸ The belongings of Grand Master Rafael Cotoner, which were left in the Palace, were sold to his brother and successor, Nicolas.³⁹ In spite of different attempts by the *Comun Tesoro* to regulate the practice, Grand Masters still succeeded in enhancing the assets of the Palace, independently of the procedures that had been established by the Order's Treasury.⁴⁰

Although the archive may not be complete, altogether these documents present the best available source of information on ownership of works of art by Hospitaller knights in early

³⁴ AOM 924, f.2-25.

³⁵ One example is that of Fra Francois de Foresta Colongue, (d.1682): AOM 929 f.8v: '*Je veux que ... tout le reste ds robbes, meubles ... tableaux grands et petits, miroirs ...*'

³⁶ One extract from a detailed inventory is the following, from the *disproprioimento* of Fra Gio Battista Brancaccio (d.1687): AOM 931 (31) No.16, f.87: '*Tre quadri grandi con cornici intagliati e dorati di palmi 8 e 5 uno rappresentante lo Sposalizio di S. Caterina con Quattro figure e una Gloria, il 2.o La Benedizione di Esau con tre figure el 3.o Il Sacrificio d'Abraham con tre altre figure*'.

³⁷ Cachia, *Treasury*, 208.

³⁸ AOM 925, f.155v: '*Introito dello Spoglio del fù Em.o Fr D.n Emmanuele Pinto morto [...] Cento trenta otto quadri, diversi, secondo sono descritti e specificati nell'inventario di detto spoglio, stimati dal Pittore dist.to Fabrè [Favray] sc 3032 con duplicata nota del med.o Vdo Ball - 3,032*'. The Order of St John in Malta minted its own currency, called the *scudo* (pl. *scudi*) as the standard silver coin and unit of account. When the *scudo* was demonetized by the British colonial government, 1 *scudo* was equivalent to 1 shilling 7 pence. Joseph C. Sammut, *Currency in Malta*, Malta, 2001, 64.

³⁹ AOM 924 f.IIIv: '*Per prezzo delle sottoscritte robbe ritrovate in Palazzo trattenute per il moderno Emmint.mo Sig. Gran Maestro. Sc 9562.5, 15. Rafael Cotoner died after three years of magistral rule.*'

⁴⁰ Cachia, *Treasury*, 207. Refer also to Chapters 3 and 4.

modern Malta. The large number of *dispropriamenti* permits a unique comparative study of an entire community that lived within a statutory set of regulations specific to them alone. The wide-ranging archival sources have provided an unusual research opportunity in that they permit a methodology that, to date is known only to have been applied in a study of sixteenth-century inventories in Venice.⁴¹ The relative similarity of the format of the manuscript documents as well as the level of detail therein permit a comparative analysis at the level of micro-detail that has led to the findings given in the second half of this thesis. The documents are also unique in that together they provide a chronological development to trends in Hospitaller art collecting, thereby permitting observations pertinent to political, social and economic developments across the broad spectrum of early modern history from the late sixteenth century to the late eighteenth century.

The findings discussed in this chapter are based on the 341 *dispropriamenti* from the archives of Valletta and Mdina, which specifically include a mention of works of art, ranging from a single devotional painting to long lists of over 200 pieces. The earliest *disproprietamento* to mention a work of art, is dated 1582, and belonged to the French knight, Fra Jean de Chitron.⁴² The latest one is dated 1807, and belonged to Fra Bali Vittorio Vachon de Belmont, one of the three knights who were allowed to continue living in Malta after the departure of the Order in 1798.⁴³

5.3 Findings: Modes and mechanisms

Art ownership and patronage is expressed or implied in a variety of ways in the *dispropriamenti*, revealing how Hospitaller knights undertook different forms of engagement with works of art. This involvement - primarily as collectors, but also as artists, as guardians of familial patrimony, and as entrepreneurs - led to the creation of paintings, their acquisition, their transfer from one Hospitaller knight to another, and their subsequent dispersal in Malta and overseas.

Modes of exchange of works of art were steeped in values specific to Hospitaller knights, in the context of an early modern society. Works of art were acquired by means of commissions and by the regulated mechanisms of gifts, inheritances and loans. These mechanisms evolved in response to individual Hospitaller preoccupations with status, based on values of social distinction and hierarchy. At the same time, at an institutional level, the Order of St John also adopted market-based mechanisms that facilitated the purchase, hire and sale of paintings. The *dispropriamenti* reveal the Hospitaller attitude to art in adopting the rhetoric of paintings as

⁴¹ Chriscinda Henry, 'What makes a picture? Evidence from sixteenth-century Venetian property inventories', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 23: 2 (2011).

⁴² ACM Sentenze Vol. 1, No. 1.

⁴³ AOM 949, f.21-22.

symbolic markers of status, while simultaneously listing works of art as commodities to be sold by the Order.⁴⁴ This process was moderated by the Order's *Comun Tesoro*, which synchronised the market-based transaction with the piety of the Order's noble purpose of upholding '*la Sacra Religione*', in the pursuit of raising revenue for the Hospitaller Order.

5.3.1 Commissions to artists

The study of the archive has revealed the multi-faceted aspect of commissions by Hospitaller knights, on one hand as a means of expressing liberality through patronage, and on the other hand as a mechanism for the acquisition of works of art. Although art inventories rarely include artists' names, the archive includes sufficient instances which can be interpreted as examples of patronage that could be expressed by Hospitaller knights, as well as listings that led to a series of commissions for paintings and sculptures. This reading has also brought to light much secondary information on specific works of art and on individual artists that had previously been undisclosed, thereby providing further evidence to inform on the extent and nature of art patronage in early modern Malta.

The *dispropriamenti* reveal numerous instances of commissions for works of art which, so far, have remained unknown and that may come to light in the course of further research. For example, Fra Ignatio Diotallevi (d.1682) described a series of ten paintings, representing the various episodes of the legend of Ismeria and three Hospitaller Knights,⁴⁵ and which were commissioned by his brother Fra Bartolommeo Diotallevi, to whom they belonged. A few of the inventories include some names of artists who are not yet known to have been in Malta, or to have had any connection with Hospitaller knights.⁴⁶ Some inventories include subjects of paintings by named artists that point to previously unknown themes in that artist's repertoire. Two late seventeenth-century *dispropriamenti* describe previously unknown paintings by the contemporary artist, Fra Mattia Preti (1613-1699),⁴⁷ namely a 'Daedalus and Icarus',⁴⁸ and a 'St Mary Magdalen of Egypt'.⁴⁹ Other *dispropriamenti* reveal commissions to previously unknown artists in Malta, namely Hippolito Faccio,⁵⁰ Giuseppe Gatt,⁵¹ and Carlo Zammit,⁵² *intagliatore*, thereby augmenting the ranks of known practising artists in Hospitaller Malta.

⁴⁴ On the aristocratic reaction to the consequences of developing capitalism, ref: Genevieve Warwick, 'Gift exchange and Art Collecting: Padre Sebastiano Resta's Drawing Album', *Art Bulletin* 79: 4, December 1997, 633.

⁴⁵ AOM 931 (30) No. 24, f.150: '*le seguenti dichiara appartenere intieramente al Sig.r Cav. Fr Bartolommeo suo fratello come che esso l'habbia fatta fare a proprie sue spese, e sono li dieci quadri dell'istoria d'Ismeria con cornice dorata che sono nella sala*'. The Ismeria legend and its depiction in Hospitaller collections are discussed in Chapter VII.

⁴⁶ Examples are the mention of a painting by Andrea Piccinelli, il Brescianino (c.1485-after 1535) in AOM 931 (32) No.22, f.189, by Pacecco de Rosa (1607-1656) in AOM 931 (32) No.33, f.282, and by Giovanni Battista Benaschi (1634-1688), in AOM 931 (31) No. 10, f.59.

⁴⁷ Neither of the two painting subjects appears in the 1999 catalogue raisonn e of paintings by Mattia Preti. Spike, *Preti: Catalogue Raisonn e*.

⁴⁸ AOM 931 (31) No. 10, f.59v. The painting is listed in the inventory of paintings that belonged to Fra Giovanni Alferi (d.1687).

⁴⁹ AOM 931 (4) No.27. The painting is listed in the *disproprio* of Fra Don Ferdinando Contreras (d.1711).

⁵⁰ ACM Sentenze ACM Vol 1 (10ii) *Sentenze*, ff.202-205. Refer also to fn. 48 below.

Other direct commissions to artists, drawn from the list of services relating to a knight's funerary arrangements, can also be inferred from the *dispropriamenti*. One requirement that was entrusted to established artists would involve the painting of various coats of arms, as was recorded mainly in the *dispropriamenti* relating to the funerary arrangements of Grand Masters. In the documents of 1594 pertaining to the deceased Fra Francesco Giachieri, the executor of his will, Fra Santa Cruz paid 12 tari to the painter Hippolito Faccio, for the heraldic arms that were customarily displayed around a knight's covered corpse before burial.⁵³ At the death of Grand Master Gregorio Caraffa in 1690, Gio Batta Caloriti (1638-1718), the Maltese artist engaged in the studio of Mattia Preti, was paid 74 scudi and 1 tari, for the painting of arms and inscriptions.⁵⁴ Caloriti seems to have made a name in this line of artistic service as he was commissioned for similar paintings of heraldic arms in 1697 at the death of Grand Master Adriano de Wignacourt, earning 87 scudi and 7 tari.⁵⁵ In 1722, his son, Giuseppe Caloriti, also an artist, received the next magistral commission, at the death of Grand Master Marc'Antonio Zondadari, though this earned him slightly less with a payment of 64 scudi and 4 tari.⁵⁶ Another example of an artist's involvement in funerary arrangements was in the commissioning of a finely decorated tombstone, executed by the *marmisti* who produced the polychrome marble work which covers the entire floor of the Order's Conventual Church.⁵⁷

In one instance, the archive helps to establish the presence of a foreign artist in Malta. The *dispropriamento* of Grand Master Zondadari (1720-1722) includes the disbursal of 48 scudi to the Sienese artist, Nicolo' Nasoni (1691-1773) for having travelled to Malta at the deceased's request, to paint in the Magistral Palace'.⁵⁸ It was previously believed that it was Zondadari's successor, Antonio Manoel de Vilhena, who had sent for Nasoni, who executed the architectural *trompe l'oeil* ceilings in oil on canvas for the Palace corridors. Nasoni also executed other

⁵¹ AOM 931 (37) No. 11, f.46.

⁵² AOM 931 (30), f.202.

⁵³ 'Ha fatturato Fra G. de Santa Cruz il tari dodici pagati a m.n Hippolite Faccio pittore per haver fatto li armi del Fra Francesco Giachieri', ACM Vol 1 (10ii) *Sentenze* ff.202-205. Fra Francesco Giachieri was a Servant-at-Arms with the French Langue; the documents pertaining to Fra Giachieri are inserted within the *dispropriamenti* documents of Fra Giovanni Paolo Corrado (10), and are not listed in the respective catalogue entry in Galea, *Inventory*, 15. Fra Santa Cruz, also executor of the will of Fra Pierre Privat in 1594, paid an identical sum for the same services, though the artist is not named. ACM *Sentenze* Vol. 1 (14), f.257v.

⁵⁴ AOM 925 1, f.3: entry dated 8 August 1690, 'sped. Mandati a Gio Batta Caloritti Pittore di sc 74:1 per manifatto.ra dell'arme et iscrizzioni per li funerali'.

⁵⁵ AOM 925, f.18: entry dated 13 February 1697, 'sped. Mandati a Gio Batta Caloriti di Sc 84:7 per manifattura delle arme e descrizzioni per li funerali'.

⁵⁶ AOM 925, f.53: entry dated 16 September 1722: 'sped.to mand.to a Mro Giuseppe Caloriti Pittore di Scudi sessanta Quattro e tari Quattro per aver fatto diverse armi, et iscrizzioni per Palazzo e per la Maggior Chiesa di S. Gio ... Cappella Ardente [the wooden structure for the Grand Master's lying-in-state inside the Conventual Church] p il funerale'.

⁵⁷ John Debono, *Art and artisans in St John's and other churches in the Maltese Islands, ca. 1650-1800: stone carvings, marble, bells, clocks and organs*, Malta, 2005; Dane Munro, *Memento Mori: A companion to the most beautiful Floor in the World*, Vol I, Malta, 2005.

⁵⁸ AOM 925, f.53: entry dated 9 September 1722, '... sped.to mand.to a Nicoló Nasoni di scudi quaranta otto di.[...] che la Vda Camera deliberó pagarglisi a suo accesso in Malta ordinatogli dal sud.o fu Em.mo defonto [Zondadari] p[er] dipingere nel palazzo mag[istra]le come dal mand. 48 --.'

similar ceiling designs inside the Grand Masters' Crypt of the Conventual church, and in other buildings of the Order.⁵⁹

The documents relating to the debtors and creditors of a moribund knight or Grand Master occasionally reveal evidence of artistic commissions. The disbursal of moneys owed by Grand Master Raimondo Perellos (1697-1720) included one payment of 223 scudi and 10 tarì made to the Grand Master's courtier Fra Afrancio Petrucci who had previously undertaken the payment to an un-named artist for nine paintings of marine scenes, on behalf of the deceased Grand Master, with his agreement.⁶⁰ Similarly, payment was made for the remainder of moneys due to Fra de Romieu, Commander of the Artillery, for a bronze sculpture of the Grand Master which was displayed during his lying-in-state.⁶¹ One payment to a named artist was that made to the Master of the Mint and silversmith, Carlo Troisi, for a silver oil-lamp that the Grand Master had commissioned for the church of Our Lady of Pilar, which served his former langue of Aragon.⁶² Fra Carlo Gattoli (d.1684) owed 50 scudi to Carlo Zammit, '*intagliatore*', for his services as sculptor.⁶³ The Ambassador of the Order to Rome, Fra Marcello Sacchetti, owed a significant sum to various (unnamed) artists, at his death in 1720.⁶⁴

Three *disproprietamenti* reveal the patronage of Maltese artists. At his death in 1722, Grand Master Zondadari owed 9 scudi and 6 tarì to the sculptor Pietro Paolo Zahra for a figure model in clay, which was later carved in stone, for the courtyard of the Palace.⁶⁵ He also owed 25 scudi to Claudio Ameli for one painting which he had commissioned.⁶⁶ The Grand Prior of Navarre, Fra Don Martin de Novar (d. 1692) bequeathed his own portrait modelled in copper by the Maltese silversmith and Master of the Mint, Carlo Troisi, to the artist himself, denoting a close artist-patron relationship.⁶⁷ Fra Pietro Rovero, (d.1752) bequeathed '*a Giuseppe Gatt, mio pittore, tutto lo stiglio da pittore come ancora tutti li colori macinati, e non macinati*'.⁶⁸ The bequest reveals the working arrangement between Rovero and Gatt which was formalised

⁵⁹ Buhagiar, *Iconography*, 119-20.

⁶⁰ AOM 925 'B', f.35: entry dated 8 May 1722: '*Sped.to mand.to del Com.re fra Afrancio Petrucci Camerier maggiore dell'Em.mo Regnante di scudi duecento e grani dieci per manifattura di 9 quadri rappresentanti prese fatte di castelli in tempo del Em.mo defunto, e uno con gli armi del med.mo quale deliberazione s'era presa dal defunto*'.

⁶¹ AOM 925 'B', f.32: Entry dated 24 May 1720, '*un busto di bronzo dell Em.nso posto nel tumolo, per ferro lavorato impiegato dal Comm. Del Artig.ria Cav.e de Romieu per servizio del busto*'.

⁶² AOM 925 'B', f.34: entry dated 24 May 1722.

⁶³ AOM 931 (30), f.202. The term *intagliatore* usually denoted a sculptor in wood of decorative motifs.

⁶⁴ AOM 931 (35), No. 15, f.108: '*E piu dichiaro che al present mi trovo qualche somma di debito con alcuni artisti e altri, ascendenti alla somma di scudi cinquecento in circa ...*'.

⁶⁵ AOM 925 f.53: entry dated 23 November 1722: '*... Poliza a' Pietro Paolo Zahara di scudi nove e sei per aver fatto un modello di cera della figura, che poi fu fatta intagliare in pietra sul cortile del Palazzo...*'.

⁶⁶ AOM 925 f.54: entry dated 15 January 1723: '*...scudi venti cinque mand.to sped.to a' Claudio Ameli che la Vda Cam.ta con suo decreto de 15 Dicembre passato delibero' pagarglisi sopra qto spoglio e' sono per manifattura d'un quadro depinto de C Ameli d'ord[ine] del fu Em.mo Zondadari.*'

⁶⁷ AOM 931 (3) No. 31, f.305v: '*Tengo un Ritratto mia sopra piancia di rame dorato, che mi ha fatto Carlo Troisi, e questo all'istesso Carlo lo lascio*'.

⁶⁸ 'to Giuseppe Gatt, my painter, all the art implements including both ground and unground pigments'; AOM 931 (37) No. 11, f.46. Giuseppe Gatt is still unknown as an artist, and may be one of the many as yet unknown decorators who executed pictorial mural pieces in keeping with late Baroque and Rococo interior styles.

through the knight's purchase of the pigments that 'his' artist needed, presumably for paintings commissioned by Rovero.

A few *dispropriamenti* include inventories of paintings brought to Malta, which would have been executed fairly recently judging by the names of artists included in those inventories.⁶⁹ Others also include mention of paintings by artists who were contemporaries of the respective knights, leading one to infer that the listed paintings would have been the outcome of a direct commission. This can be seen in *dispropriamenti* pertaining to knights who owned paintings by Preti, an artist who benefited significantly by the ready patronage of Hospitaller knights in Malta.⁷⁰ The documents pertaining to Fra Andrea Marciano (d. 1696, Malta) contain an inventory of works of art including fifty-seven paintings, a number of which were executed by Preti, or by the artists in his studio, as copies of his works: "... *Una testa di Nro Sig.re vestito di porpora originale del Cav. Preti con cornice dorata ... Quattro quadri di palmi 9 di altezza e sei di larghezza conteneva la Visitazione, la Tentazione nel deserto, I Sig.re servito dagli Angeli dopo il digiuno di quaranta giorni e Christo risuscitato quando compare alla Madalena in forma di Ortolano, copie dell'originali del Cav. Preti / Quattro quadri di pal 6 di larghezza e pal 4½ di altezza dei Quattro Evangelisti, copie*".⁷¹ Fra Ottavio Valguarnera (d. 1698) too, owned paintings by Preti, his contemporary, as listed in his *disproprio*: '*Sei quadri con sua cornice dorata grande, in numero due quadri cioe uno del Cavaliere Mattia, e l'altro La Diana di Pichinelli*'.⁷²

Knights who were posted overseas also sought Preti's paintings. Fra Silvio Sortino was the Receiver of the Order in Palermo, a position of great trust, as could be expected of the man responsible for the collection of all the revenue due to the Order, within his jurisdiction. On his death in 1686, Sortino had a debt with Preti, who wrote to the *Comun Tesoro* to stake his claim on the price of two paintings – '*due quadri grandi con differenti figure*' – that had remained unpaid, other than a gold cross that had been presented to Preti as a sign of gratitude.⁷³ Fra Sortino's detailed inventory, listing over sixty paintings was compiled in June 1686 and has the

⁶⁹ AOM 927, f.195v: Fra Orazio Sansedoni (d.1751) sought to repatriate to Siena '*il ritratto grande della S.ra Porzia mia nipote fatto in Siena dal Ferretti*'. The artist would have been the Florentine Giovanni Domenico Ferretti (1692-1768), a contemporary of Sansedoni. AOM 931 (32) No.33, f.282: In 1699, Caravita bequeathed a painting of the 'Immaculate Conception' by Francesco de Rosa to an un-named knight, his '*segretario*'; Caravita would have acquired the painting some decades after the artist's death. Better known as 'Pacecco', de Rosa (1607-1656) was a Neapolitan painter who represents the trailing end of Caravaggism in Naples; Theresa Vella, *Catalogue entry on Francesco de Rosa, 'Noli me Tangere'*, in *Caravaggio and paintings of realism in Malta*, ed. by Cynthia Degiorgio and Keith Sciberras, Malta, 2007, 194.

⁷⁰ Mattia Preti lived in Malta for almost forty years, till his death in 1699.

⁷¹ AOM 931 (32) No. 3, f.25.

⁷² AOM 931 (32) No.22, f.189. Fra Ottavio Valguarnera belonged to the Langue of Italy and had a palazzo in Palermo, where he died in September 1698. The attribution of the second painting, 'Diana' may refer to Andrea Piccinelli, il Brescianino (c.1485-after 1535).

⁷³ John Azzopardi and John T. Spike, *An unpublished autograph letter by Mattia Preti*, Malta, 1994.

knight's signature, yet as none of the paintings are listed with artists' names, the two paintings by Preti remain unidentifiable.⁷⁴

Another contemporary of Mattia Preti, Fra Giovanni Caravita, the Order's Receiver in Syracuse, appears to have involved himself closely in the execution of the paintings that he acquired from the master's studio, knowing that they were by Preti's assistants yet with the artist's occasional intervention: '*Quadri tredici di varie figure con cornice mezzo dorato copie del fu Sig.r Cav.r Preti fatta colla sua assistenza che si devono molto stimare*'.⁷⁵ The latter comment shows in addition that copies of Preti's paintings produced by the artist's studio were also highly valued and that the acquisition of a copy was itself a privilege.

By the above examples, the *dispropriamenti* reveal the mechanisms of commissions which Hospitaller knights conferred on artists, in Malta and overseas.⁷⁶ The significance of public events and rituals, such as funerals, has also been shown to lead to a spate of commissions to painters. The archive has also revealed secondary information, in the form of artists and paintings which have been, as yet, unmentioned in the canon of art history in Malta. Similarly, new biographical information on artists has been uncovered.

This study indicates the parameters that delimit an interpretation of the *dispropriamenti* archives, in the absence of complete art inventories, and in the previously noted absence of documents which belonged to known art collectors. For example, the patronage of Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1573-1610)⁷⁷ by Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt, Fra Ippolito Malaspina, Fra Francesco dell'Antella and Fra Antonio Martelli, has been pieced together from other archival sources.⁷⁸

5.3.2 Gifts and bequests

Another significant value attached to Hospitaller art collecting is revealed in that part of the *disproprio*mento containing a statement of a Hospitaller knight's last wishes, the *quinto*. The

⁷⁴ AOM 931 (31) No. 9, n.p.

⁷⁵ AOM 931 (32) No. 33, f.282.

⁷⁶ In addition to the *dispropriamenti*, a brief survey of artists of secular and religious works who worked for members of the Order since the end of the fifteenth century, including Giovanni Bellini, Colijn de Coter, Franciabigio, Titian, Tintoretto, Parmigianino, Farinati, El Greco, Pierre Mignard, Largilliere, Nattier, Tiepolo, Louis Michel van Loo, Batoni, Greuze, Vestier, Danloux, Marette, mungs, Jan van Scorel, van Heemskerck, Cornelisz van Haarlem, Borovikovski and Sacchi is given in Toffolo, *Image of a Knight*, 9, 11 fn.8

⁷⁷ These paintings were executed during the artist's 14-month residence in Malta as a novice of the Order and later Hospitaller knight. The commissions resulted in the creation of Caravaggio's 'Portrait of Alof de Wignacourt and a young page' (1607-08, Louvre), 'St Jerome' (1607-08, Valletta), 'Sleeping Cupid' (1608, Palazzo Pitti), and 'Portrait of a Knight/Fra Martelli' (1608, Palazzo Pitti). Caravaggio arrived in Malta in July 1607 to fulfil the requisite 12-month noviciate '*in convento*', professing to the knighthood on 14 July 1608. Following his involvement in a serious brawl in August that year, he was imprisoned. Caravaggio's escape from Malta in October 1608 led to his defrockment by December. The dating of his Maltese paintings follows the chronology outlined by David M. Stone, 'Painting in Exile: Caravaggio and the Island of Malta', in *Caravaggio and Paintings of Realism*, 65-78.

⁷⁸ Degiorgio and Sciberras, eds, *Caravaggio and paintings of realism in Malta*.

quinto stood for the gifts that a Hospitaller knight could bequeath at the time of his death, to the value of one-fifth of his belongings. The *quinto* offered a unique instrument to a corps of men of noble descent, who had taken the vow of poverty, to present gifts in the spirit of friendship. Alternative forms of gift-giving, such as charity and acts of mercy held a strongly Hospitaller purpose in its channelling of God's love to others in need. However the charitable form also established a hierarchical sense of patronage that was incompatible with the levelling effect of the gift as an expression of friendship.⁷⁹ By means of the *quinto*, a knight could ensure that his last public gesture would be a final affirmation of the noble values of liberality and honour, those same values that formed part of his upbringing as a member of a noble family, and that subsequently enabled his entry into the Hospitaller Order. The *quinto* was also revealing in the way it enabled the singling out of the beneficiaries, or heirs, as worthy of the bequeather's respect or affection. Frequently the beneficiaries would also be named as executors of the Hospitaller knight's *dispropriamento*, thus such a bequest was in effect a gift that was loaded with reciprocity, as a form of exchange for the services that the executor was entrusted with at a knight's death. Such an exchange also articulated the kinship shared by Hospitaller knights, in ensuring the appropriate closure of the material chapter of a Hospitaller brother's life on earth and thus reveals a new possibility for the interpretation of bequests within the context of gift giving. Such a reading would be specific to religious communities, in view of the Order's regulations on Hospitaller knights' usufruct of their belongings, which subsequently denied them the right to dispose of the said belongings.

Hospitaller knights were sensitive to the many levels of meaning in giving gifts, particularly to the way the apparent disinterest veiled the intrinsic implication of obligation and reciprocity. Within the parameters of art as bequeathed gift, the quality of the painting or the sculpture being willed would be a measure of the donor's reputation for liberality, as well as for aesthetic judgement. Of the latter, quality in a work of art was perceived in terms of the artist's fame as well as the painting's material richness (including the value of its frame) and thus communicated the giver's sense of honour in presenting a highly valued work of art.⁸⁰ According to Fra Sabba da Castiglione, in the practical advice given in *Ricordi ovvero Ammaestramenti* (1554) titled '*Circa il Donare*',⁸¹ a young knight would be better off giving a durable object as a gift, such as arms, books, statues, pictures, medals, gems, horses, dogs or similar, as the memory of the person making the gift would last for very long. He also advised prudence in choosing a gift by keeping in mind the person who was to receive it, suggesting as

⁷⁹ There is little to no evidence on gift-giving as Hospitaller friendship in terms of seasonal occasions, such as Christmas or Epiphany. Gift-giving may have also occurred under the guise of loans, however the subject requires further research before drawing conclusions on the reasons for the singular nature of the *quinto* as an established form (if an oblique one) of gift-giving. On gift systems that revolved around the year's calendar, refer to Zemon Davis, *The Gift*, 23-33.

⁸⁰ Creighton E. Gilbert, 'What did the Renaissance patron buy?', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 51: 2, Summer 1998, 424, 446.

⁸¹ Sabba da Castiglione, '*Ricordo 49: Circa il Donare*', in *Ricordi ovvero Ammaestramenti*, Venice, 1560, f.16v-17.

examples that arms should be presented to a soldier, and books to a man of letters. He concluded by stating that a donor must always keep two things in mind: firstly, his own ability to choose an appropriate gift, and secondly, the merits of the recipient of the gift.⁸² Additionally, in a later chapter on collecting works of art and other objects, Fra Sabba explained how paintings reflected a collector's talent, sophistication, civility and courtliness;⁸³ conversely paintings reflected on the donor's own judgement in terms of artistic discernment, and how well he could judge these qualities in the recipient. In the context of this advice, making a gift of a work of art in a bequest could fulfil the donor's wish of keeping his memory alive, reinforced by the desirable qualities of aesthetic judgement and sophistication that were represented in his choice.

The majority of *quinto* narratives follow a pattern that reflects the mentality of the early modern age, blending Renaissance concepts of liberality and honour, with a Counter-Reformation imperative of applying prudence.⁸⁴ The choice of beneficiaries was also an affirmation of a knight's ability to apply judgement, compelled by the limited nature of the value as was permitted by the regulations.

The first set of bequests to be listed in a *quinto*, would be donations in cash or in the form of foundations to religious orders, for the celebration of mass for the repose of the soul of the deceased knight, and for the distribution of alms to the poor who would accompany the knight's funerary procession, and whose prayers were also solicited. Some instances reveal the bequest of paintings and sculptures as pious symbols of a Hospitaller knight's religious devotion: Fra D.Orfeo di Vincenzo, (d.1735) presented two medium-sized paintings for the side-altar of St John the Evangelist, to be selected by the church's procurator, to the Church of Our Lady of Victories.⁸⁵

Another knight endowed his langue's church six years before his death in 1680.⁸⁶ Bali Raymond Soler was a benefactor of the church and convent of Our Lady of Pilar, the church next to the auberge of the Aragonese knights, having presented a number of paintings and silver items during his lifetime.⁸⁷ In 1674, he commissioned the artist-knight, Fra Pedro Nunez de Villavicencio to execute his full-length portrait which he then presented to the Pilar Convent (Fig. 104). That same year he purchased his burial-space inside the Oratory of St John's.⁸⁸ The

⁸² 'E in questo fine non lascerò di dire che 'l donatore deve avere sempre due rispetti: l'uno alle facultà e condizioni sue e l'altro alle qualità e merito di quello a chi dona'. Sabba, *Ricordi*, f.16v.

⁸³ '... e tutti questi ornamenti ancora commendo e laudo, perché arguiscono ingeno, politezza, civiltà e cortegiania, ...', Sabba, *Ricordi*, f.56-60v.

⁸⁴ Guerzoni, 'Liberalitas, Magnificentia, Splendor', 337.

⁸⁵ AOM 927, f.56v: 'Lascio all'altare, o sia congregazione di S. Giovanni Evangelista della Vittoria due quadri mezzani a scelta di Proc.ri da eligersi per d.o altare'.

⁸⁶ AOM 931 (2), No. 5, f.17.

⁸⁷ Vella, 'The Bali Raymond Soler', 65-69.

⁸⁸ AOM 931 (2) No. 5, f.17v.

date links the painting with Soler's preparations for his death, leading to an interpretation of the portrait as bearing witness to the more vulnerable facets of his character. In sitting for the portrait, and in composing his own epitaph,⁸⁹ Soler not only expressed these fears and hopes linked to death, but did so through the medium of art.

Another knight, Caravita, after payments due to his servants were made, opted to leave the remainder of his bequest to charities chosen by the Prior of the Conventual Church, bypassing the possibility of leaving other gifts in his *quinto*: '*Mi dispiace molto che la strettezza del mio quinto non mi permette il dimostrare il mio affetto verso il mio diletteissimo Nipote il Commendatore e gli altri miei amici e signori*'.⁹⁰ Such bequests, however modest, reflected the Hospitaller knight's piety, while its semblance of charity carried the implied reciprocal promise of heaven for the donor. Caravita owned forty paintings, of which only three could be disposed of as he wished.

At the opposite end of the spectrum of beneficiaries would be the knight's servants as recipients of his belongings, such as his clothing, kitchen utensils or furniture.⁹¹ Works of art do not appear in this category of recipient, as they would have signalled a knight's lack of judgement on the appropriateness of bequests, besides intimating the breakdown of hierarchy. Utilitarian gift giving was also a thin disguise for payments in exchange for services still to be rendered. By couching the exchange in the gracious language of gift giving, a moribund knight averted the likelihood of being abandoned while he was dying. Other bequests to servants were genuine acknowledgements of servants' loyalty expressed in Christian terms hinting at a reciprocal affection.⁹²

Following on from the aforesaid pious bequests, the *quinto* would proceed with the donation of paintings and other similarly precious objects to different sets of recipients who were mentioned in order of social rank, accompanied by appropriate expressions of benevolence. These expressions reveal the nuances of gift giving that were specific to Hospitaller knights. One factor that is apparent is a knight's desire to keep his memory alive, and in their visibility, paintings effectively enabled the fulfilment of such a wish. Fra Giovanni Minutolo (d.1677) started his bequest with two paintings - a Madonna, and a St Anne with children in her arms - to

⁸⁹ '*vivus Moritviro in tenebris stravi lectvlym mevm, et rrvsvm post tenebras spero lvcem, qvando veniet immvtatio mea in novissim die*' (While living in death's shadow, I made my bed in the gloom of night; and yet, after the darkness, I hope for the light when the time has come for my transformation on the last day). Soler's tombstone is located in the Oratory of the *Decollatio*.

⁹⁰ AOM 931 (32) No. 33, f.281. 'I am very sorry that the limits of my *quinto* do not permit me to show my affection towards my dearest Nephew, the *Commendatore* and towards my friends and lord'.

⁹¹ AOM 928, f.81v: Comm.re Fra Domenico Ruffo (1788) left his linen to his servant Domenica Maria; f.104: Comm. Fra Giuseppe Rogadeo (1791) left the belongings listed in his *quinto* to his servant Rosa Monreal.

⁹² AOM 931 (31) No.36, f.212: Fra Carlo Fran.co Rovero di Costanze on compensation to his servant Giacomo Barbieri: '*In ricompenso della fedele e punctual servitù, prestatami per il spatio di 30 anni...*' AOM 931 (32) No. 33, f.281: Caravita was a faithful observer of the Order's regulations on *disproprietamenti*, and asked the Treasury's procurator to give his servants what they wished as they had proved faithful to him in difficult times.

be given to Fra Antonio Caravita '*che glieli lascio per memoria mia*',⁹³ and a large painting, the Baptism of Christ to Fra Gio Domenico Manso, '*perche se lo gode per amor mio*'.⁹⁴ Cav. Francesco di Cordova (d.1697) expressed the wish that the small gilt framed painting of the Pietà that was next to his bed would be given to the Rev.do Lodovico d'Aversa, with the hope that he enjoyed the painting in his memory.⁹⁵ The Knight Grand Cross, Fra Rene de Vexel du Tertre (d.1666) bequeathed his own portrait to his compatriot the French knight M. le Chev. Du Creux Fogeres.⁹⁶

With bequests to Hospitaller knights of a similar or higher rank to that of the deceased, the *quinto* would mark out the recipients in order of rank. Gifts to the Grand Master of the Order were frequently accompanied by an obsequious rhetoric of respect and gratitude. Such legacies are particularly significant as subsequently, Grand Masters left most, if not all, paintings at their death to form part of the magistral estate.⁹⁷ Bequeathing a work of art to be kept and displayed with the magistral collection was the only opportunity for a knight to be symbolically represented by a piece that reflected his aesthetic taste and judgement as part of a highly visible and esteemed collection. Unlike the endowment of churches, another public forum for the display of works of art, the inclusion of one's work of art inside the magistral palace implied that knight's respectful presence, by proxy, in the midst of the uppermost circle of power wielded by the Order. One Hospitaller knight ensured that his gift to the Grand Master would not be included with the latter's *spoglio* by bequeathing it to the Magistral estate, thus avoiding the risk of the painting being given away to another collection.⁹⁸

When a painting would be left to the Grand Master, the expressions cited by the Hospitaller knight reveal various forms of respect towards the magistral office. Fra Cesare Lopez (d.1666) asked 'His Eminence Grand Master Cotoner to deign to accept a painting of the Magdalen, as a sign of his servitude'.⁹⁹ Lopez also left a painting, the Seven Angels, to a future Grand Master, Fra Gregorio Caraffa Prior of Roccella.¹⁰⁰ The knight Grand Cross Fra Gabuccini (d.1681) also included Caraffa as well as three other recipients whose names were a roll call of the highest

⁹³ 'which I leave to him, in my memory'.

⁹⁴ 'for him to enjoy, in the name of my love'; AOM 931 (29) No. 29, f.145v: '*Primariamente voglio che al Con. Fra Antonio Caravita siano dati li due quadri della Madonna e di S. Anna con li bambini in braccia che glieli lascio per memoria mia / lascio al Vicepriore Fra Gio Dom.co Manso il quadro del Battesimo di Nro Signore in grande, perche se lo gode per amor mio*'.

⁹⁵ AOM 931 (32) No.19, f.164: '*Vuole che il quadretto della Pietà con cornice d'oro che stà vicino al suo letto si debia dare al Rev. P. Fra Lodovico d'Aversa Sacristano del B.to Giacomo acenò se la goda in memoria d'esso*'.

⁹⁶ AOM 931 (12) No. 5, f.17v: '*Je donne mon portrait a M. le Chev. Du Creux Fogeres*'.

⁹⁷ Refer to Chapters III and IV.

⁹⁸ AOM 931 (32) No. 27, f.229v, Comm. Fra Lomellino: '*A S[ua] Em[inen]za et Stato Mag[istra]le lascio un crocefisso dorato con sua croce d'ebano et al piede un basso rilievo*'.

⁹⁹ AOM 931 (28) No.6, f.80: '*Prevalendomi della Licenza concessami di poter disporre del Quinto, priego l'Em.o Sig.r Gran Maestro Cotoner degnarsi accettare in segno della mia servitù verso l'Em. Sua il Quadro della Maddalena*'.

¹⁰⁰ AOM 931 (28), No. 6, f.80: '*Piu dono all'Ill.mo Sr Pr della Roccella Caraffa il quadro delli sette angeli*'. Caraffa was Grand Master from 1680 to 1690.

dignitaries of the Order at the time, and to whom he left one painting each.¹⁰¹ Grand Master Perellos received a painting of Our Lady from Fra Davide Cocco Palmeri, the Archbishop of Malta (d.1711), who bequeathed it as a sign of his deepest respect and esteem.¹⁰² Fra Fabio M. Visconti (d.1738) bequeathed a painting, the Virgin Mary with the Child Jesus and St John as a modest sign of his 'obsequious obedience' to Grand Master Raymond Despuig (1736-1741).¹⁰³

Legacies to Grand Masters also symbolised the gratitude, the obedience and the reverence that a Hospitaller knight expressed in the words of his *quinto*, and in the form of paintings or sculptures. The work of art would be accompanied by the gracious acknowledgement of the authority of the Grand Master by the Hospitaller knight, yet at the same time establishing a shared ground through the mutual appreciation of art.¹⁰⁴ A significant number of bequests of paintings were made to Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena (1722-1736), indicating that the palace art collection was given prominence during his magistracy.¹⁰⁵

Some *dispropriamenti* reveal that a Hospitaller knight would bequeath a painting to the Grand Master in reciprocation for the granting of a licence or permit. Fra Don Giacomo Garofalo (d.1766) bequeathed the choice of one of his best paintings, to Pinto de Fonseca in recognition of the permission granted to the knight to dispose of the patrimonial property which he had inherited from his family, separately from his *dispropriamento*.¹⁰⁶ Another instance also reveals

¹⁰¹ AOM 931 (30) No.12, f.64, 'Il Gran Prior vuole e ordina che si diano all'Infre Signore cose in segno di gratitudine cioe all' Ill.mo Sig.re Priore della detta Sac. Relig. e sua Chiesa Mag.re Conventuale Fra Don Gregorio Caraffa Prior della Roccella un quadro per uno addelitt.re loro dalli quadri d'esso ill.mo e sponete. Piu alli Ill.mo Sig.r Cav Fra Fran.co Cavalli della Vener. Lingua d'Italia un quadretto della Madonna Sma col Bambino Giesu' ... et alli M.to Ill.mi Rev.di Sig.r don Alessandro Bologna Canonico della Cat.le della Not.le [Mdina] e fra Davide Cocco Palmieri Fra Cappe.no della Ven. Lingua d'Italia un quadro per uno benvistoli di q.lli che vi sono nella saletta del Balcone dell'appartamento Nobile della casa d'esso ill.mo Sig.r esponente a riguardo dell'assistenza loro in questo mio dispropriamento'.

¹⁰² AOM 931 (34) No. 10, f.69: Fra Davide Cocco Palmeri, *All' Emm.mo sig.re Gran Maestro Regnante perellos lascio un quadro con figura della Madonna SS.ma, supplicando lo umilmente a riceverlo per atto della somma stima, e profondo rispetto, con cui ho venerato sempre la dignissima persona dell'Em.za sua, alla quale preiege dal Sig.re lunghi anni di prospera vita, e felicità di successi per la maggior Gloria della nostra commune Madre Religione.*

¹⁰³ AOM 927, f.111: 'All' Em.mo e Rev.mo Sig.r Gran Maestro lascio un quadro con cornice dorata rappresentante la Vergine col suo Bambino Giesu e San Giovanni Battista, [...] supplicando l'Em.mo sua a compiacersi gradire picciol segno della mia ossequiosissima ubbidienza'.

¹⁰⁴ In 1699, Preti bequeathed a painting of the Madonna of Pilar, the patron saint of the langue of Aragon to which Grand Master Perellos belonged; AOM 931 (32) No.28, f.252v. Fra Ferdinando de Contreras (d.1711) left an original painting by Preti (1613-1699), 'St Mary Magdalen of Egypt', to Grand Master Perellos as a sign of reverence and obedience; AOM 931 (4) No. 27, f.388: 'Al prelibato Emm.mo e Rev.mo Sig.r Gran Maestro mio superiore in segno della veneratione et obediencia da me dovuta lascio un quadro di Santa Maria Maddalena Egittica, pittura originale del fu Cav. Fra Mattia Preti', Preti executed a number of paintings of Mary Magdalen, yet none have been identified with the iconography of Mary of Egypt. Spike, *Preti: Catalogue Raisonné*, 443. Fra Girolamo Statella (d.1747) presented a picture of Christ's image by Albert Durer to His Eminence Pinto de Fonseca (1741-1773) as a sign of his obedience; AOM 927, f.166: 'Lascio a sua Eminenza in ricognizione di mia ubbidienza un quadretto del volto di Christo di Alberto Duro con cornice nera e festoni dorati'. Similarly Fra Pietro Reitano (d.1774), conventual chaplain of the Order, entreated the Grand Master Ximenes de Texada to accept an ivory statue of S. Francis de Paola, for his enjoyment, as a sign of his devout gratitude and obedience; AOM 931 (37) No.24, f.96: 'In primo luogo supplico al S.E. il Sig. Gr. Mro di gradire una statuetta d'avorio rappresentante S. Francesco de Paola, in attestato di mia dovuta gratitudine et ossequio'.

¹⁰⁵ Refer to Chapter IV.

¹⁰⁶ AOM 931 (36) No. 15, f.131v: 'Ed attesa la facolta' accordatami benignamente da S.A. Em.a Mro degnissimo Gran Maestro per poter disporre de' beni patrimoniali, ed acquistati per successione, e del quinto Lascio a detto

that the *quinto* recognised the office of Grand Master and not the individual himself. The German Prior, Fra Filippo Guglielmo, Count of Messelrode (d.1753), presented a painting of his patron saint, St Philip the Apostle, to Grand Master Ramon Despuig, to acknowledge the favour granted by his predecessor Manoel de Vilhena who had passed away.¹⁰⁷

An alternative to the magistral palace art collection would be the collections which formed part of the holdings of the Order's langues, displayed in the respective *auberges*.¹⁰⁸ Hospitaller knights would choose to endow their respective langue with paintings, an act of munificent charity that denoted its own reciprocal path to the reward of divine favour.¹⁰⁹ As with bequests of paintings to the Grand Master, these works of art would enjoy a measure of public exposure amongst young novices and knights of the Order who lived in the *auberge* of that *langue*. The display of portraits in this context implied that the sitter was regarded as a role model.¹¹⁰ The public display of such portraits was occasionally a condition of a bequest to a *langue*.¹¹¹

Besides bequests to Grand Masters or to high-ranking Hospitaller knights, the *dispropriamenti* also include legacies to members of a Hospitaller knight's family, accompanied by expressions of duty and loyalty. Such gifts were an expression of the flow of familial continuity, and would be made out to married siblings who would have ensured the family's unbroken lineage. Nephews who joined the Order were also singled out in gift giving to family members.

Portraits were favoured choices in bequests of works of art to family members. Whether the portrait was of the deceased knight, or of a relative, its presentation as a gift would have held a particular significance in view of a Hospitaller's professed vow of chastity that rendered them unable to bestow legitimacy on offspring.¹¹² The French knight Fra Antoine de Tressemanes Chasteuil (d.1684) bequeathed to his brother a portrait of their deceased uncle, Mons Le Bailli

S.A. Em.a un de' migliori quadri, che si troverà nel mio spoglio con supplicarlo umilmente degnarsi volerlo aggradire per minimo segno di mia riconoscenza e della mia ossequia osservanza.

¹⁰⁷ AOM 931 (43) No.32, f.108: 'in riconoscimento poi della licenza havuta dal fu Em.mo Don Antonio Manoel [de Vilhena] al Em.mo moderno [Despuig]'.

¹⁰⁸ For a discussion on the Order's secular buildings as repositories for paintings, refer to Chapter IV.

¹⁰⁹ Warwick, 'Gift exchange and Art Collecting', 636. Warwick discusses late seventeenth-century attitudes to the choice between presenting a painting as a gift to a public institution, and selling that painting to present the revenue to charity.

¹¹⁰ Around the 1750s, the French auberges commissioned two portraits by Antoine Favray (1706-1798) of two famous knights and distinguished leaders of the Order.¹¹⁰ The painting of 'Grand Master Philippe Villiers de l'Isle Adam taking possession of Mdina' was displayed in the Auberge de France while the portrait of 'Grand Master Jean de Vallette' was prominently displayed over the entrance to the Auberge de Provence during the 1765 bicentenary celebrations of the Knights' victory over the Ottoman Turks. Degiorgio and Fiorentino, *Favray*, 73. The authors quote an eighteenth-century traveller's description of these paintings: F.E. de Saint-Priest, *Malte par un voyageur françois*, Part II, Malta, 1791, 88, 90. Both paintings were removed to the Palace in the early nineteenth century and are now on display inside the Palace.

¹¹¹ Fra Francesco Pappalettere (d.1759) bequeathed two portraits, of Benedict XIV and of Cardinal Arguiglieres, to the Langue of Italy on condition that they were to be displayed in the Grand Hall of the Auberge of Italy; AOM 927, f.254. 'Lascio alla V.da Lingua d'Italia li ritratti della S.a Mem.ria di Bened.o XIV, e del fu Emo. Sig. Card.e Argiviglieres affinché siano posti alla gran sala della med.ma'. The German knight, Fra Ermanno, Baron de Beveren (d.1736) similarly left a number of un-named portraits to the Auberge d'Allemand; AOM 927, f.52: 'Li ritratti li lascio all'Albergo d'Allemagne'.

¹¹² Refer to Chapter VII for a discussion on portraiture in Hospitaller collections.

de Manosque, also a Hospitaller knight.¹¹³ Similarly, Fra Cesare Leognano (d. 1701) expressed the simple wish that his portrait be returned to the family home in Apruzzo.¹¹⁴ Fra Francesco Maria Lante della Rovere (d.1777) bequeathed to his nephew Duke Luigi, a gold casket with a circle of diamonds around his portrait. His symbolic bequest poignantly suggests the knight's own return to his ducal family home.¹¹⁵

Another favoured theme for paintings given as gifts to a Hospitaller knights's family would be that of devotional paintings of saints and patrons of the deceased knight's homeland,¹¹⁶ or of portraits of their respective family's sovereign ruler.¹¹⁷ Bequests of belongings embellished with heraldic symbols similarly defined family links.¹¹⁸

Legacies to family members also infer the dependence that knights had on younger relatives to see to their needs and to ensure their care in their old age. The Spanish knight, Fra Antonio de Sousa (d.1695) left a painting, a Virgin Mary, to his nephew's wife, Sig. Donna Isabella, who he named first amongst other recipients in the higher ranks of the Order.¹¹⁹ The subject of the painting may have been intended not only to encourage religious piety and prayer (implied to be in memory of the deceased) but also as a subtle form of identification between the Virgin Mary and Donna Isabella, thereby representing a gracious compliment to the younger woman. Fra D. Luzio Crescimanno (d.1769) bequeathed a small painting, the Blessed Virgin and Child, to his nephew Don Giuseppe, hoping that he would be remembered in his nephew's daily prayers.¹²⁰ Fra Francesco Maria Lante della Rovere (d.1777) willed two devotional paintings - St John the

¹¹³ AOM 929 (1) No.22, f.32v: '*Je laisse a mon frere de Chasteuil le portrait de feu Mons. Le Bailly de Manosque*'.

¹¹⁴ AOM 931 (32) No.35, f.303v: '*Desidero poi che il mio ritratto sia fatto capitare in mia casa in Apruzzo*'.

¹¹⁵ AOM 931 (37) No.22, f.90: '*A sua Ecc. Lenza il Sig. Duca D. Luigi Lande mio nipote una scatola d'oro con un giro di Brillanti intorno al proprio ritratto*'.

¹¹⁶ Fra Fabio Gori (d.1698) bequeathed to his nephew, Mon. S.r de Lanteri, a painting of a *sacra conversazione* depicting two patron saints of Siena, '*S. Caterina di Siena, S. Bernardino e Nra Sig.r di Casal Vecchio*'; AOM 931 (32) No.23, f.191: '*Lego a Mon S.r de Lanteri mio nipote il quadro di S. Caterina di Siena, S. Bernardino e Nra Sig.r di Casal Vecchio con sua cornice dorata p mia memoria*'. Fra Gio Borgherini (d.1732) an Italian knight of possibly Lombard extraction bequeathed to Fra del Bene a small painting of San Carlo Borromeo, patron saint of Milan, and another small painting of the Shroud of Turin; AOM 927, f.34v: '*A S.G[rande].Pr[ior Fra]. del Bene un quadretto di S. Carlo Borromeo ed altro quadretti rapp.te la Sacra Sindone con ornamenti*'.

¹¹⁷ In a comparable spirit of loyalty to one's family homeland, Fra Luca Tommasi (d.1771) bequeathed to his nephew, Fra Gio Battista, three portraits of Pietro Leopoldo I, Grand Duke of Tuscany; AOM 931 (37) No.2: '*Lascia per titolo di legato al Cav.e Fra Gio Battista Tommasi suo nipote li tre Ritratti delli Gran Duca di Toscana, appesi nella stanza dove pernotta*'. Only a few years earlier, Fra Luca had received these paintings by bequest from his own brother, Fra Bartolommeo (d.1768), who at the same time also left a painting of the Tuscan saint, Margaret of Cortona, to his nephew Fra Gio Battista; AOM 931 (37) No.26, f.101v: '*Desidero che sia dato al Sig.r Com.d Fra Luca mio fratello il Ritratto di S.A.S. Gran Duca di Toscana Pietro Leopoldo Primo. ... Lascio per memoria del Sa. Cav. Fr Gio Batta mio nipote il quadro di S. Margarita di Cortona con sua guarnice orata guarnita di rame dorata*'.

¹¹⁸ Fra Bali Amadeo de Cajs (d.1730) of Provence, asked his nephew the Count of Cajs to leave to the Confraternity of the Holy Spirit in Nice, his native city, an altar frontal and a silk '*pianeta*' onto which the family coat of arms was to be embroidered; AOM 927, f.29v: '*Alla confraternita dello Spirito Santo, fondata nella Citta di Nizza mia patria un avant'altare ed una pianeta di drappo di seta nelle quale fara metter le arme della Fameglia*'. Fra Giovanni Francesco Morano e Amato (d.1673) left several silver objects with his coat-of-arms to various Italian convents; AOM 931 (29) No.18, f.92v.

¹¹⁹ AOM 931 (2) No.37, f.169v: '*Lascio alla Sig. Donna Isabella moglie di mio nipote il quadro grande della B. Vergine che ho comprato dal spoglio del fu Bagli' Viani, Prior ...*'.

¹²⁰ AOM 931 (37) No. 34, f.158v: '*Piu a [mio nipote Don Giuseppe] un piccolo quadro per il capezzale coll'effigie della B.ma Vergine e Bambino in braccia, affinche si ricorda di me nelle sue quotidiane orazioni*'.

Baptist, and a small Madonna by Correggio - to two nephews, both monsignors, presumably in Rome where Fra Lante had lived.¹²¹

Mattia Preti (d.1699) left a substantial bequest of property as well as a painting, a Mary Magdalen to Giacchino Loretta one of the artists who worked in his bottega, and some property to Giacchino's wife Sig.ra Cleria and her niece, Anna, as well as a painting of St Mary Egyptian to Antonio Loretta. The singling out of the Loretta family, from amongst the rest of Preti's bottega students, suggests that the Loretta family was a surrogate family for Preti in Malta.¹²²

Finally, following gifts to family members through the *quinto* were those gifts that re-affirmed bonds of kinship with other Hospitaller knights, as well as with friends outside the Order. Such gift giving is more of an expression of disinterestedness and affection than can be inferred from the gift giving to high-ranking knights or to family members. Such gifts would be accompanied by the hope that the recipient prays for the soul of the donor. Fra Jacques de Verdellin (d.1673) bequeathed not only a devotional painting of the Madonna, but also a *prie-dieu* in walnut wood to Fra Baldassar d'Amico, stating the hope that the latter would remember to pray for his soul.¹²³

Sometimes a bequest was accompanied by words of affection for the donor, suggesting that the work of art is setting a seal on a friendship between donor and recipient. Fra Priore D. Francesco Caraffa, who died in his priorate overseas in 1679, bequeathed a painting which was kept in Malta, a St Ursula, to Monsignor d'Averra as '*un segno d'affetto*'.¹²⁴ Fra Francesco Maria Lante della Rovere (d.1777) left a painting on copper, of the Blessed Virgin, to Fra Pietro Rosselmini '*per un atto di affettuosa amicizia*'.¹²⁵

Bequests of paintings between Hospitaller knights also imply a measure of collegiality amongst equals through a mutual appreciation of art: Fra Paolo Emilio Argeli (d.1692) left a painting by Preti to Fra Giovanni Battista Crispo; the painting, that had originally been a gift from the artist to Fra Argeli, was described as '*il ritratto del Crocefisso ... con due angeli a pie della Croce, e cornice dorata dipinto dal Cav.e e Com.re fra Mattia Preti, del qual per sua bonta' me ne fece*

¹²¹ AOM 931 (37) No.22, f.88, '*Lascio a Mons Pietr'antonio Lante mio nipote il quadro di S. Gio. Batta con cornice d'argento ... Lascio a Mon. Lancellotti altro mio nipote una piccola Madonna del Correggio con cornice dorata, ed un orologio*'.

¹²² AOM 931 (32) No.28, f.252v: '*[Lascio] a Antonio Loret il Quadro di S. Maria Egiziaca / A Giacchino Loret quello di S. Maria Madalena*'. The painting of St Mary Egyptian may be the same one that later appears in the *dispremiamento* of Fra Fernando Contreras (d.1711), and that was then bequeathed to Grand Master Perellos. Refer to fn.89 above.

¹²³ AOM 931 (12) No. 15, f.64v: '*Più dono il mio ginocchiatore di noce col quadro della Madonna SS.ma ... á Fra Baldassar d'Amico perché habbi memoria di pregar Iddio l'anima mia*'.

¹²⁴ AOM 931 (30) No. 8, f.47v, '*A Monsignor d'Averra lascio uno quarto di Sant'Ursola che e in Malta, e mi compass[...]-endo questo un segno d'affetto*'.

¹²⁵ AOM 931 (37) No. 22, f.88.

un regalo.¹²⁶ Other knights would leave the choice of painting up to the recipient: Fra Gio Battista Ansidei (d.1687) left the choice of a painting '*a sua elettione*' to Sig.r Comm.r Fabio Gori.¹²⁷ A few years later Gori (d.1698) bequeathed two paintings to his nephews.¹²⁸ Though there is insufficient detail to link the two bequests, together they represent an empathic link between friends who shared aesthetic tastes.

When the recipient was not a Hospitaller knight, this would be suggestive of a bond of friendship based on shared aesthetic tastes which flourished beyond the collegial circumstances of the Order. In 1680, Fra Carlo Laudati's bequeathed a painting of the Holy Mother of God to the Bishop of Gaeta, the city where Laudati lived, and where he died.¹²⁹ Fra Cesare Lopez (d.1666) bequeathed a small picture and two wax figurines to Sig. Cesare Passalacqua (1595-1683).¹³⁰ The latter was a prominent Maltese citizen who served as a Jurat. Passalacqua was a generous church benefactor who was granted a Barony as a sign of gratitude for services rendered to the Order of St John, and who in turn included various Hospitaller knights as his testamentary beneficiaries.¹³¹

Paintings form a unique kind of gift amongst knights when their value essentially lies in a shared appreciation of the work's artistry and subject matter. By cross-referring the contents of the *quinto*, to biographical information on recipients, one may deduce whether such a gift would have been an expression of generosity from one collector to another with comparable tastes: The Vice Prior of the Conventual Church, Fra Domenico Manso, a beneficiary of the 1677 bequest of Fra Minutolo,¹³² was later also a beneficiary of the bequest made by Fra Francesco Cavallo (d.1682),¹³³ making him the recipient of two paintings, a Madonna and Child, and a St Francis de Paule, together with a silver holy water fount and a reliquary. A later instance of the gift of a painting to the same Manso is found in the *quinto* of Fra Gio Battista Brancaccio (d.1687), whose own art collection amounted to 238 paintings. The reason expressed by Brancaccio was his gratitude for the many favours granted to him by Manso.¹³⁴ A fourth bequest to Manso presents the highest possible accolade of respect - that of the Grand Master himself: Grand

¹²⁶ AOM 931 (31) No.32, f.205. On the onward transfer of paintings as gifts amongst a network of close friends, refer to Warwick, 'Gift exchange and Art Collecting', 638.

¹²⁷ AOM 931 (31) No. 15, f.76.

¹²⁸ AOM 931 (32) 23, f.93v

¹²⁹ AOM 931 (30) No. 13, f.71v: '*Lascio al s.te Erasmo dè Vio suo nipote [di Fr Alfonso d'Albito] un quadro con l'immagine della Madre Sma con cornice d'oro. / Lascio a Monsig.re Ill.mo Vescovo di Gaeta un'altro quadretto col'Immagine della Madre SS.ma con cornice d'ebano*'.

¹³⁰ The wax figures are described as '*due bambini di cera con sue vesti di crastallo con suoi piedistalli di legname Negro*' in another copy of Fra Lopez's *disproprioamento*. AOM 927, f.32.

¹³¹ Francesca Balzan, 'The Passalacqua Chain: A splendid seventeenth-century jewel in Malta', in *Celebratio Amicitiae*, 237-242.

¹³² AOM 931 (29) No. 29 f.145v.

¹³³ AOM 931 (30) No.25, f.152v: '*Lascio al Vice Pr. Fra Gio. Dom. Manso un quadro con la cornice dorata della Madonna col Bambino in Braccio, un'altro piccolo quadretto di S. Franc.co di paola, il fontino d'argento dell'acqua benedetta e l reliquario ch stanno appesi al capezzale*'.

¹³⁴ AOM 931 (31) No.16, f.81: '*Dispongo che si consegna al S. Comm. Fra Dom.co Manso il quadretto colla testa della Madalena piangente con cornice dorata in memoria della mia gratitudine per li molti favori, che nelle sue [...] m'ha impartito*'.

Master Gregorio Caraffa (d.1690) left a painting of San Domenico in Soriano, as well as a reliquary, a crucifix, a statue of S. Rosalia, and a diamond-studded ring to Manso, one of only four beneficiaries. A fifth bequest naming Manso as executor and beneficiary is that made by Fra Cesare Leognano (d.1701) who left a painting of the Madonna and Child, '*per memoria del mio affetto*'.¹³⁵ This suggests that Manso's interest in paintings was well known, a reputation which was sustained over several years.

Legacies between Hospitaller knights also went some way to discharging the obligation created in naming two or more as executors of one's *disproprioamento*. The role of executor was often an onerous task entrusted to those who could see to the full process of dispersal of a deceased knight's property, a process that could sometimes run into months or years. The role could involve the drawing up of inventories and evaluations, the commissioning of a tombstone, seeing to the burial of the knight, fulfilling the terms of his bequest, and paying off any debts that he may have left behind. Sometimes the executors were asked to follow detailed instructions, as were those written by Fra Gaetano Bandinelli (d.1786), to restore a small oval painting on copper of St Bernardino of Siena, and to place it in a small and properly apportioned frame gilt in gold and once completed to perfection, to deliver it under good custody to Countess Ippolita Zanardi in Mantova.¹³⁶

On naming the executors of his will, a knight would sometimes include a gift, within the *quinto*, as a sign of thanks in advance for the dedicated service that he would have asked of his brothers. When Fra Carlo dei Conti della Languglia (d.1682) asked Fra Spinola, '*... di voler essere esecutore a questo mio disproprioamento et insieme di accettare per mia memoria quel quadretto col Sacro Crocefisso in cui vi é un indulgenza plenaria*',¹³⁷ the painting served as an expression of thanks, as well as a medium by which the recipient could receive plenary indulgences through prayer. In 1699, Caravita entreated the Prior of the Conventual Church and Secretary of the *Comun Tesoro*, together with another priest, to fulfil his wish that they be the executors of his *disproprioamento*.¹³⁸ His bequest of three small paintings - '*quadretti*' - suggests that Caravita did not wish the gift to be too overt a form of remuneration. Yet the value of a painting by the named artist active in Naples, Francesco de Rosa (1607-1656), would not have been lost on the Treasury Secretary, whose work involved the administration of the revenues of the Order.

¹³⁵ AOM 931 (32) No.35, f.302.

¹³⁶ AOM 928, f.70: Fra Gaetano Bandinelli (d.1786), '*...far pervenire in Mantova alla Nob.e Sig.ra Contessa Ippolita Zanardi nata nerli il piccolo ovato in rame rappresentante S. Bernardino da Siena, facendolo per altro prima riguardare, e metter in una piccola cornice proporzionata e propria e di lego dorato e cosi perfezionato inviarlo ben cusodito alla Sud.a Sig.ra contessa*'.

¹³⁷ AOM 931 (30) No.27, f.158: '*... to accept to be the executor of this, my disproprioamento and at the same time to accept in honour of my memory the small painting of the Crucifix with a plenary indulgence*'.

¹³⁸ AOM 931 (32) No.33, f.284: '*Supplico il Prior della Chiesa, il Seg.ro de Tes.o et il P. Elias voler esecution di q.a mia ult.a volontà. Lasciando al Sr Prior di Chiesa per un piccolo contrassegno d'amorevolezza I due quadretti dei due G. Mri perellos e Caraffa, al Sr Segr.o il quadretto dell'Imac. Concettione di N.S. del Franc. di Rosa*',

Fra Giacomo Cavarretta (d.1702) left two allegorical paintings, *Hope* and *Peace*, to the executor of his *dispropriamento*, Fra Cristostomo Crispo out of gratitude for the help given to him.¹³⁹ Fra Pietro Rovera (d.1752) entreated Sig. Com.r Brovana and Sig. Luca Tonna (a lay Maltese) to accept the task of executors of his *dispropriamento*, asking the former to receive a painting of the Madonna of Sorrows, and the latter to receive another painting, representing the Crucifixion with the Virgin and the Magdalen crying at the foot of the cross.¹⁴⁰ Fra Francesco Maria Lante della Rovere (d.1777) first nominated and then asked D. Gio Batta Altieri, the Grand Prior of England, to accept the role of executor of his last wishes, leaving him a silver framed painting of St Clare.¹⁴¹ Fra Pietro Reitano (d.1774) left the choice of a painting to the executor of his will.¹⁴²

This brief study of the various manifestations of Hospitaller gift-giving through the mechanism afforded by the *quinto* provides an alternative context for the application of Marcel Mauss's classic text, *Essai sur le don*,¹⁴³ which formulated the multi-layered significance of gift giving as a spiritual mechanism for establishing status, as well as the material mechanism of the societal sharing of wealth. The findings drawn from the *dispropriamenti* have also been modelled on the findings presented by Natalie Zemon-Davis in *The Gift in Sixteenth Century France*. Zemon-Davis extended Mauss's text to a historical period in a specific region, and demonstrated links between age-old practices and beliefs, to classical texts as well as contemporary sixteenth-century ones.¹⁴⁴ Another comparable adaptation of Mauss's model was made by Genevieve Warwick who studied gifts of works of art in seventeenth-century Rome, by analysing the rhetoric that accompanied the gift.¹⁴⁵ The present study of the *dispropriamenti*, and the *quinto* in particular, reveals how the bequest served as a variant of gift giving specific to Hospitaller knights, symbolising the continuity of the bonds of kinship in defiance of death. This research has also revealed how Hospitaller knights' adapted the *quinto* to the noble language of gift giving, through nuanced expressions of social identity. This study has also looked at how the *quinto* gave form to a knight's expectations of reciprocity, by the obligations which accompanied his apparently disinterested legacy.

¹³⁹ AOM 931 (33) No.9, f.77v: 'Al P.D. Cristostomo Crispo per atto di gratitudine et assistenza fattami lascio due quadri rappresentanti La Speranza, e Pace'.

¹⁴⁰ AOM 931 (37) No.11, f.46: 'In fine prego il Sig. Com.r Brovana ed il Sig. Luca Tonna si a voler favorirmi di esser esegutori miei testamentarij. Pregando il primo a ricevere un quadro rappresentante la Madonna di Dolori vicino al mio letto, ed al secondo a ricevere un altro rappresentante un alto crocefisso colla Vergine e la Maddalena piangente apiedi della croce'.

¹⁴¹ AOM 931 (37) No.22, f.88-88v: 'Finalmente nomino, anzi prego ...il Gran Priore d'Inghilterra D. gio Batta Altieri a voler essere esecutori di questa mia ultima volonta', lascio ... un quadretto d'argento con cornice di metallo rappresentando S. Chiara'.

¹⁴² AOM 931 (37) No. 24, f.96: 'Al Sig. Balì Averro de stima come mio esecutore per la presente mia volonta, un quadro a sua scelta'.

¹⁴³ Marcel Mauss, *Essai sur le don*: The gift: the form and reason for exchange in archaic societies, transl. by W.D. Hall, London, 1990.

¹⁴⁴ Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth Century France*, Wisconsin, 2000.

¹⁴⁵ Warwick, 'Gift exchange and Art Collecting', 630-646.

5.3.3 Familial succession of works of art

Another aspect of the *dispropriamenti* that imparted specific Hospitaller significance to an art collection is revealed in the handling of belongings which remained part of a knight's patrimonial inheritance and that would be returned to the family home at his death. Such statements are infrequently seen in the *dispropriamenti* and afforded another distinction allowing a knight to stand further apart from, or above, his peers by implying privilege and an extraordinary form of pedigree demonstrated through the accumulation of ancestral wealth. For example, the *spoglio* of Fra Andrea di Giovanni distinguished those pieces that were acquired by maternal and paternal inheritance, separately from those he had acquired during his life as a Hospitaller knight.¹⁴⁶ This exception was granted at the time of his profession to the Order, in a signed agreement between the Grand Master and the knight, or his guardians.¹⁴⁷ For similar reasons, such *dispropriamenti* would not include any inventory of note.

Conversely, this lacuna introduces another gift-related aspect to art collections in the life of a Hospitaller knight, that of the gift of works of art across generations. Paintings that were bequeathed to knights as part of their family inheritance, were retained within a privileged set of belongings that, like the *quinto*, fell outside the jurisdiction of the *Comun Tesoro*. A knight's ownership of inherited paintings was no mere loan, but an exclusive form of a family-mediated gift that defined his noble status. Despite the brevity of its presence in Malta, an inherited art collection would have held a higher symbolic value as a statement of aristocratic lineage, irrespective of the number of paintings it would have comprised.¹⁴⁸ Subsequently, the return of those paintings to the family home was that knight's re-affirmation of his noble family roots and his recognition of the heirs (nephews and nieces) who were to be entrusted with upholding the continuity of the family's noble standing. This kind of transfer of paintings and other inherited belongings to the family home, was in fulfilment of a duty, inferred from the rhetoric of obligation, not of affection, as is expressed in the *dispropriamenti*.

Fra Manfredino Casciar (d.1683) peremptorily claimed that all his property belonged to his father, and did not list any belongings in his *disproprio*.¹⁴⁹ Fra Averaldo de Medici (d.1694) also stated that his belongings were all '*beni patrimoniali*', and were listed in the testament which he notarised in Florence, yet he entreated his brother to pay twenty-five Florentine scudi to make up for whatever may have been due to the Order.¹⁵⁰ In some instances, mention would be made of specific works of art and the family member to whom they were to

¹⁴⁶ AOM 931 (34) No. 25, f. 215: '*Qua sopradicta bona Paterna e Materna ...*'.

¹⁴⁷ Caravita, *Statuti*, 105.

¹⁴⁸ Warwick, 'Gift exchange and Art Collecting', 630.

¹⁴⁹ '*Dichiaro che tutti li mobili che sono in casa e particolarmente nella camera dove sono infermo spettano e sono del mio padre, e li suoi, havendo sempre vissuto un figlio di famiglia*', AOM 931 (30) No.33, f.186.

¹⁵⁰ AOM 931 (31) No.5, f.51: '*In Firenze ho lasciato il mio Testamento de' beni patrimoniali et in caso, che non haversi lasciato il legato a questa Sacra Relig. le lascio scudi venti cinque di moneta fiorentina da pagarci dal mio fratello delli medesimi beni patrimoniali per una sola volta*'.

be returned, being next in line for the inheritance. One can only imagine that such patrimonial inheritances would have included fine examples of paintings, seen by other art collectors and artists, leaving a potent trail of artistic influence.

In some instances the *dispropriamento* implies that the Hospitaller knight would not have the necessary permits in hand to return such '*beni patrimoniali*' to his family home: Fra Gio Batta Gadaleta (d.1669) described how he had always lived with his nephew and his wife, and that all his belongings were bought for him by that nephew, including two large paintings - a Samson and Delila and The Persecution of Saul - besides four un-named paintings.¹⁵¹ The *dispropriamenti* reveal how paintings got singled out for their return to the family home. Fra Gaetano Despuche (d.1760) put in a plaintive request to the Grand Master, for permission to return a set of portraits to his family, as he preferred to do this rather than to leave them with his only relative in Malta, his brother Fra Walduardio.¹⁵² Fra Reitano pointed out, in the course of his inventory list, that five large paintings of portraits and landscapes belonged to his nephew Gio Lauron.¹⁵³ Fra Alessandro Ballati (d.1735) presented a long inventory of paintings and belongings, yet diligently pointed out the single painting - a Holy Mother and sleeping Child, on copper - that had to be returned to his brother.¹⁵⁴ Fra Carlo Farrugia (d.1773) too stated in his *dispropriamento* that, except for the paintings, curtains, mirrors and large crucifix that belonged to his mother, all his property belonged to him and could therefore be disposed of by the *Comun Tesoro*.¹⁵⁵

Fra Pietro Giacomo Testaferrata (d.1763) describes in his *dispropriamento* how, in furnishing his house, he borrowed everything from his nephews and nieces in Malta. While this may have been an attempt by Testaferrata to keep his belongings within the family, it also illustrates a knight's dependence on his family to provide him with the means to maintain a lifestyle as was expected of one of his rank.¹⁵⁶

One detailed *dispropriamento* illustrates the extent and the means by which a family member was expected to support his uncle, a Hospitaller knight, through the provision of paintings as well as cash. Fra Cesare Lopez (d.1666) explained that he held a collection of forty-six

¹⁵¹ AOM 931 (28) No.12, f.87v.

¹⁵² AOM 927, f.253: '*Inoltre prego umilmente S.E. accio mi accordi la grazia di ritornare alli miei congiunti li ritratti dei miei genitori, zio, e mio. E come che il quadro grande della Scesa dell Croce e' vincolato e devo tornarlo a qualche d'uno de miei parenti, non avendo qui altri che mio fratello il P. Walduario*'.

¹⁵³ AOM 931 (37) No.24, f.96: '*... eccettuasi lo scrittoio e cinque quadri rappresentanti, cioe due ritratti e tre paesaggi grandi appartenente a mio nipote Gio Lauron*'.

¹⁵⁴ AOM 927, f.58v: '*Diversi altri quadretti, eccettuato però una della Madonna Santiss.ma col Bambino addormentato in rame quale non é mio, dovendosi rimandare al mio Fratello o Nipoti in sua mancanza*'.

¹⁵⁵ AOM 931 (37) No.27, f.106: '*... eccettuati tutti gli quadri, le tendine, e gli specchi della Sala, la Cassa del Presepe colla sua tavola, ed il Crocefisso grande, quali sono della Sig.ra mia Madre*'.

¹⁵⁶ AOM 927, f.276v: '*Dichiaro inoltre che tutti l'altri mobili e robbe che si trovano in casa ove di presente io abit, sono parte della Sig. A D. Elisabetta Saliba, Padrona della med.ma casa ove io dimoro e parte della Sig. Baronessa D.a Vincenza Matilde con pure l'altare con tutte le sue appartenenze cioe candelieri e il quadro di S. Egidio*'.

paintings (all listed in detail in his *dispropriamento*) which had been promised at his death, by notarial deed, to his nephew Sig.r Marchese Diego in Naples, who was in turn obliged to set aside 125 ducats for masses to be heard for the repose of Lopez's soul. However the nephew had defaulted on his obligation to forward 300 ducats that fell due on an annual basis to his uncle, with the result that Lopez ordered that the *Comun Tesoro* keep all forty-six paintings until his nephew sent the 300 ducats, and the 125 ducats for masses.¹⁵⁷ It would also appear that Lopez did not wait to hear from his nephew and bequeathed three of his paintings and two wax figures – a Magdalen to Grand Master Cotoner, a Seven Angels to the Prior Caraffa, a St Francis de Paule to Fra Raimo de Albito, and two wax statues of children, to the above-mentioned Jurat, Sig. Cesare Passalacqua.¹⁵⁸

Fra Giulio Ginori (d.1728) described at length how his brother had been obliged to support him financially, by providing a home and a servant. He then bequeathed all his *quinto*, including four paintings of various miracles of Christ, to the same brother as well as to his sister-in-law and nephews. He also mentioned another four paintings that he had commissioned to two artists, which were as yet unfinished and therefore unpaid for; Fra Ginori stated his expectation that the payment would be effected from the revenue generated through the sale of his *spoglio* (and not from his *quinto*).¹⁵⁹ This may suggest *a priori* a separate status for works of art (and the settlement of related debts) from that of mundane commodities such as medicine, food, clothing and similar items, in the way that the *Comun Tesoro* classified the financial outlay necessary in executing a knight's bequest.

An interesting, if minor, aspect relating to patrimonial collections suggests that some Hospitaller knights were aware of the importance of family wealth to the women of the family, and may have attempted to oversee their well-being in the spirit of a patrician. Fra Baldassare Focolaro Celesti (d.1730) asked that his entire *quinto* be presented to his four nieces and sister, and that the painting of his niece Sig.ra Angelica be returned to her, as it had been presented to Celesti on loan.¹⁶⁰ Fra D. Giovanni Moncada (d.1734), the receiver of the Order in Palermo, stated his wish that his patrimonial inheritance remain with Sig.ra D. Angela Moncada, duchess of Albafiorita throughout her life, following whose death it would pass on to his other sister Flavia.¹⁶¹ Fra Antonio Vaini (d. circa 1740) invited his niece, Principessa D. Angela Vaini to choose a devotional painting from his collection.¹⁶² Patrimonial art collections therefore held an

¹⁵⁷ AOM 931 (28) No.6.

¹⁵⁸ AOM 931 (28) No.6, f.30. Refer also to fns 123, 124 below.

¹⁵⁹ 'Altri Quattro m'ho ordinati a due pittori, onde succedendo, che al tempo della mia morte non fossero finiti, e da me non pagati intendo, dispongo, e voglio, che siano sodisfatti con i beni del mio spoglio', AOM 927, f.15.

¹⁶⁰ AOM 927, f.30: 'di piu vuole e comanda che il quadro che rappresenta l'effigie della Sig.ra angelica di lui nipote si dia alla stessa, essendo robba sua'.

¹⁶¹ AOM 927, f.43

¹⁶² AOM 927, f.89

additional value as a marker of identity specific to Hospitaller art collectors, to establish noble status, lineage and privilege mediated by the extraordinary potential of ancestral collections.

5.3.4 *Loans of works of art*

The loan of works of art is somewhat akin to gift giving, as another symbolic form of obligation and reciprocity, albeit one based on trust and honour. The loan of a painting was also a more flexible mechanism enabling the circulation of paintings in a way that was not bound by the absolute parameters of a gift. This can be compared to the circulation of books on loan,¹⁶³ which established informal networks of like-minded Hospitaller knights.¹⁶⁴

The *dispropriamenti* reveal instances of works of art found in residences other than their actual owner's. Fra Ludovico de Conti Ferretti (d.1699) drew the attention of the executors of his *disproprio* to the paintings found in his main hall which belonged to Capitano Gio Batta Pandolfini Fiorentino.¹⁶⁵ Fra Agostino Trivelli (d.1698) singled out two large paintings, a Mystic marriage of St Catherine, and a Cleopatra, which belonged to Comm.re Fra Bartolommeo del Pozzo.¹⁶⁶

As with gifts, the loan of paintings could establish and reinforce the bonds of kinship. Fra Michele Cortez (d.1699) declared that he kept a painting of a Crucifix that belonged to Fra Joseph Munoz.¹⁶⁷ Fra Gio Battista Darmanin (d.1692) declared that two paintings, a St Veronica and a St John the Baptist, belonged to Fra Giuseppe Darmanin, his nephew, who had paid for them.¹⁶⁸ The *disproprio* of the Italian knight Fra Domenico Cleria (d.1695) shows how the knight paid eight zecchini, for a painting by Preti, on behalf of another knight, Fra Prior Giuseppe Marulli.¹⁶⁹

Sometimes the arrangements which governed the loan of paintings would not be immediately clear. The *disproprio* belonging to Fra Gio Mastrilli (d.1669) included a list of paintings which were presented to Fra Baldassaro d'Amico as security - '*La Nota puntuale delle Robbe*

¹⁶³ Natalie Zemon-Davies, 'Beyond the Market: Books as Gifts in Sixteenth-Century France: The Prothero Lecture', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 33, 1983, 69-88.

¹⁶⁴ Warwick, 'Gift exchange and Art Collecting', 638. Warwick presents the model of the exchange of information between a closed group that led to bonds of friendship that were strengthened through such networks.

¹⁶⁵ AOM 931 (32) No.26, f.220v: '*Lascio per avvertimento che i quadri e benche li quali sono nella Sala non sono miei ma del Cap.n Gio Batta Pandolfini Fiorentino*'.

¹⁶⁶ AOM 931 (32) No.21, f.181v: '*...eccettuatione due quadri grandi l'uno della Madonna rappresentante Lo Sposalitio di Sta Caterina, l'altro una Cleopatra li quali appartengono al Comm.re Fra Bartolommeo del Pozzo*'.

¹⁶⁷ AOM 931 (44), f.65v. '*Tambien declaro que un quadro de un crucifigo que tengo es del Comm. Fr. D. Joseph Munoz. Y otro del retratto del Monsr Castellar [Grand Master Jean de Lascaris Castellar 1636-1657] con un crucifixo ... son del Comun Tesoro*'.

¹⁶⁸ AOM 931 (1), No.28.

¹⁶⁹ AOM 931 (32) No. 12, f.137: '*Item, dichiaro di havere un credito di otto zecchini col S.D. Giuseppe Marulli di Barletta e sono per altritanti, che di mio proprio denaro ho pagato qui al S.r Com.r fra Mattia Preti per un quadro, che sta facendo per servitio del med.mo S.r Marulli*'.

del Sig.r Fra Gio. Mastrilli che lascia in potere del Sig. Fra Baldassaro d'Amico per sicurtà' et in pegno di quanto s'è obbligato per me – listing seven large, framed paintings.¹⁷⁰ This was shortly followed by a second list of twelve other paintings which had been presented by D'Amico to Fra Andrea Marciano.¹⁷¹ A note written at the start of the *dispropriamento* - stating that Fra Mastrilli had to leave Malta in some haste to return to his homeland - may suggest that the knight may have needed ready cash in hand, possibly presenting the nineteen paintings to two other knights as security for moneys borrowed. Such instances in the *dispropriamenti* infer that loans of paintings could service a subtle form of business exchange similar to pawning, through the presentation of a painting as insurance for the return of money or items owed.

The archive also reveals how loosely some Hospitaller knights interpreted the regulations that prevented them from undertaking any form of trading activity.¹⁷² Fra Giovanni Moncada (d.1734) stated that he held a credit note of forty scudi from Marchese Natale for three paintings which were sold to Moncada on condition that if the marquis ever wished them back, he could do so on returning the sum of money.¹⁷³ The *dispropriamento* of Fra Francesco Rovero di Costanze (d.1690) contains a similar possibility of a loan that concealed a form of transaction that fell outside the parameters of a collegial exchange: he stated that the two gilt framed paintings in his house – a Madonna, and a portrait of Marchese del Brigo - belonged to Gianna, daughter of the deceased Antonia Pontremoli.¹⁷⁴

Cav. Francesco di Cordova (d.1697) indicated in his *dispropriamento* that he held a number of objects which did not belong to him which were kept as guarantee for a sum of money.¹⁷⁵ Two small paintings of flowers, as well as two octagonal mirrors were kept as guarantee for forty ducats that were owed by Fra Bernardo Cappello; he instructed that the paintings and mirrors were to be restituted to Don Bernardo on payment of the sum.

From the above, it can be seen that the loan of works of art provided a means for the transfer and exchange of works of art mediated through relationships between peers who shared the broader values inherent to gift-giving specific to the noble members of the Hospitaller community. The following sections will look at other mechanisms which were developed by the Order of St John in response to changing economic conditions and to market-based systems of exchange in early modern Malta.

¹⁷⁰ AOM 931 (28) No.9, f.65.

¹⁷¹ AOM 931 (28) No.9, f.66.

¹⁷² Caravita, *Statuti*, 70.

¹⁷³ AOM 927, f.43: '*Di piu dichiaro che tengo un credito di 40 scudi il Marchese Natale per tre quadri venduti con la condizione che se piu' li volesse se li debbano restituire con pagare de scudi 40 e sono due quadri e uno piccolo*',

¹⁷⁴ AOM 931 (31) No.34.

¹⁷⁵ AOM 931 (32) No.19, f.156v-157: '*Dichiaro che li due specchi ottagonali con cornice di pezzi di specchi et indurate e due quadretti piccoli con fiori pintati non sono miei ma di Bernardo Cappello Senzale dè Cammj quali stanno pegni per docati quaranta, onde quando D.o Bernardo restituirà d.a soma se gli devono restituire li due specchi e due quadretti che Gio batta mio creato sà quali sono*'.

5.3.5 *The purchases and sales of works of art*

With the seventeenth-century's gradual shift from medieval chivalric values towards modern practices mediated through a nascent market economy, gift exchanges of works of art took a different character through formalized notarial deeds or direct sale.¹⁷⁶ Notarial deeds indicate a shift from the medieval practice of gift-exchange to the market-based practice of purchases and sales.¹⁷⁷

The research carried out on the *dispropriamenti* also leads to new findings on other means available to Hospitaller knights, as well as to lay art collectors, to buy works of art within the structure of a market. This study reveals new possibilities for ascertaining the form and nature of the art market in early modern Malta, thereby opening the door to further historical enquiry on the Order's reaction and adaptation to changing market factors.

Previously, any conclusion that could be drawn on an art market was only an approximation that encompassed direct commissions or sales inside an artist's studio. This system of purchasing art avoided any requirement for a middleman, by enabling the acquisition of works of art directly from the various artists who lived in Valletta or its suburbs. One response to the growing market system was the setting up of a guild of artists in Malta, in the form of a Confraternity of St Luke in 1671, intended to protect their interests against such instances as the poaching of apprentices and workmen, as well as protection against foreign artists, besides other concerns. The guild sought the Grand Master's formal recognition with regards to their proposed statute, which was forthcoming by 1672. The guild, which encompassed painters, sculptors, gilders as well as embroiderers, was still active in 1780.¹⁷⁸

The number of artists practising in Malta also included expatriate artists, who were attracted to Malta to try their fortune, as well as artist-knights, who lived on the Maltese islands for a short period. The improved economic conditions engendered by the presence of the Order of St John in Malta led to an international presence of Flemish, Tuscan, Roman, and Sicilian artists, which in turn, contributed to the artistic enrichment of Maltese talent, leading to a growing availability of artistic skills for the many churches and palaces that started to be built in the rest of the country by the first half of the seventeenth century.¹⁷⁹ In the first years of the seventeenth

¹⁷⁶ In 1710, Fra Ottavio Tancredi used the services of Notary Gaspare Domenico Chircop; AOM 931 (35) No. 16, f.125. In 1761, Fra Antonio Grisella used the services of Notary Filippo Amato; AOM 931 (38) No. 18, f.57v. Fra Giuseppe Raiberti used the services of the Maltese notary, Vittorio Denaro, who may have drafted the *spoglio*; Toffolo, 'A Maltese Auction of 1779', 111-117.

¹⁷⁷ This is similarly reflected in the diminishing number of paintings in Hospitaller bequests that are superseded by other decorative objects that also fulfil a function such as watches and jewellery as appropriate gifts. Ref Chapter III, *infra*.

¹⁷⁸ AOM 1185 ff.341-342v quoted in Giovanni Bonello, 'The First Guild of Artists in Malta, 1671', in *Histories of Malta VII: Closures and Disclosures*, Malta, 2006, 155-163.

¹⁷⁹ A comprehensive survey of artists practising in Malta from the mid-sixteenth century to the end of the eighteenth century is found in Sciberras, *Baroque Painting in Malta*.

century, among the foreign painters known to be active in Malta were the Florentine Giovanni Smeraldi (active 1599-1605), the Sicilians Ippolito de Facio (active 1599-1602), and (?his son) Giovanni Battista di Bonafacio (active 1607) as well as Giacomo Racanelli (active 1611), as well as the Flemish artists Matteo Purbous (active 1596-1602) and sculptor Simon Prevost and the German Melchior Russo (active 1616).¹⁸⁰ A few years earlier, in 1597, the Flemish painter from Antwerp, Joanne Gallo, was engaged by Grand Master Martin Garzes for the embellishment of the Palace in Valletta.¹⁸¹

Research in the archive has also revealed alternative forms of sales of works of art. One form demonstrated in the *dispropriamenti* was the straightforward and private transaction between the owner of a work of art and the buyer of that work. Fra Carlo Costiole (d.1752) revealed his debt over two paintings in his *disproprioimento*, stating that he had two framed portraits, one of the King of Sardinia and one of Bali Puejo, '*il quale propriamente non é mio per non haverlo pagato al suo Padrone il di cui nome non mi ricordo*'.¹⁸² This leads to the consideration of alternative sources for the purchase of works of art, such as those which could have been supplied by Maltese art collectors.

Medieval panel paintings and wood- or stone-carvings, originating from Sicily or Spain from the thirteenth century onwards may have been purchased from collections of the nobility who resided in Mdina.¹⁸³ The *dispropriamenti* include devotional paintings '*alla greca*',¹⁸⁴ possibly a reference to the pre-Renaissance style of Northern European art or to Byzantine art, both of which may have been sourced from Maltese collections.¹⁸⁵ Dominic Cutajar explains that it was a common error of the time to describe North European pre-Renaissance works as Greek, quoting an eighteenth-century description of a sixteenth-century Netherland School triptych of the Deposition inside the chapel of the Magistral Palace "... *il quadro maggiore della quale tempo fa era pittura Greca portato da Rodi ...*".¹⁸⁶ While such paintings may have been valued as icons, comparable to those brought from Rhodes and venerated by the Order, in aesthetic terms such works of art would have appeared anachronistic, or primitive, to Baroque art collectors.

¹⁸⁰ Cutajar, 'Caravaggio in Malta', 13. These artists' names surfaced in the course of the author's archival research in Maltese parish archives.

¹⁸¹ Giovanni Bonello, 'Random Notes on Artists related to Malta', in *Histories of Malta VI: Ventures and Adventures*, Malta, 2005, 165-6.

¹⁸² AOM 931 (37) No. 12, f.49; also AOM 927, f.204v. The latter document is a copy, and includes the additional information that Fra Costiole kept his belongings in the Italian auberge.

¹⁸³ To date, no documentary evidence has yet been found that shows private art collections in Maltese hands prior to 1530, while demonstrating extensive artistic patronage for churches and chapels. Fiorini, 'Malta in 1530', 189-93.

¹⁸⁴ AOM 931 (30) No. 35, f.191v.

¹⁸⁵ Under the Norman, Angevin and Aragonese rule, art patronage kept abreast of some of the more striking developments in mainland Europe, of which one of the finest works was the large polyptych of 'St Paul' (c.1410) from the Aragonese workshop of Luis Borassa (1360-c.1425) as the altarpiece of the Mdina Cathedral. Gash, 'Painting and Sculpture', 514-5.

¹⁸⁶ Cutajar, *St John's Church*, 117. The triptych was transferred to the Sacristy of St John's in the nineteenth century.

A further source of antique works of art, lay in the discovery of classical and prehistoric sculptures, in the Order's estates or even in Malta. During the reign of Grand Master Verdalle, four antique low-relief marble sculptures were displayed in the magistral gardens.¹⁸⁷ An eighteenth-century visitor to the Palace, Jean Houel, drew and published pictures of the bas-reliefs displayed along the wall of one of the Palace Corridors, facing the windows (Fig. 105, Fig. 106); he also illustrated some Etruscan terracotta vases that were also displayed in the Corridor (Fig. 107).¹⁸⁸ Other pieces which belonged to Gian Francesco Abela, Vice-Chancellor to the Order were known have been excavated from Maltese soil (Fig. 108).¹⁸⁹ However, the apparent uniqueness of Abela's collection suggests that at the time, rather than common practice, such a collection in Malta may have been an exception in Malta, until the end of the eighteenth century when scientific interest in the ancient sites were shown by visitors to Malta on the Grand Tour (Fig. 109).¹⁹⁰

By statute until 1584, Hospitaller Knights were not permitted to sell their property,¹⁹¹ implying that works of art could only be bought directly from non-Hospitaller art collectors or dealers. During the Chapter General of 1584 a new article was inserted that gave the Grand Master authority to permit the sale of objects by a knight, but only within the scope of those objects that he had acquired from his family as his patrimonial right. Paintings and other works of art were often parts of such patrimonial belongings, and this statutory clause may have provided one means for the arrival in Malta, of works by continental artists, and of their subsequent dispersal. The above-mentioned sources for the purchase of works of art demonstrate their limited availability until the turn of the seventeenth century.

The other possibility for the sale of works of art which has been uncovered in the course of my research, was that of the public auction, which came into being towards the end of the sixteenth century.¹⁹² The growing numbers of belongings of deceased knights which were accumulating in the *Comun Tesoro* triggered the demand for a new system for the effective and swift dispersal of the *spoglio*. The post of *Commissario degli Spogli* was created in 1556 because the venerable procurators of the *Comun Tesoro* could not manage the many *spogli* and goods bequeathed by

¹⁸⁷ Thomas Freller, *The Life and Adventures of Michael Heberer von Bretten*, Malta, 1997. The low-reliefs portrayed Zenobia Queen of Palmyra, Tullia, Claudia Metella and the amazon Pentesilea. Refer also to Chapter III.

¹⁸⁸ Jean-Pierre Laurent Houel, *Voyage pittoresque des Isles de Sicile, de Malte et de Lipari*, Paris, 1782.

¹⁸⁹ Gian Francesco Abela, *Della descrizione di Malta isola nel mare siciliano, con le sue antichità ed altre notizie*, Malta, 1647.

¹⁹⁰ Nathaniel Cutajar, 'Origins of the National Museum of Archaeology', *Treasures of Malta*, 2: 1, 1995, 67-71. In 1786, Fra Gaetano Bandinelli bequeathed a marble statue of Hercules to relatives; AOM 928, f.71v: '*una statuetta di marmo rappresentante un piccolo Ercole esistente in mia camera*'.

¹⁹¹ However it was not uncommon practice amongst knights to try to by-pass the Order's regulations by other means. The *dispropriamenti* contain several instances of loans that may have in fact been instances of exchange between knights. Refer to 'Loans', below.

¹⁹² The first use of the term '*incanto*' (auction) in the *dispropriamenti* occurs in 1593; ACM Sentenze Vol I (5), f.12. Earlier *dispropriamenti* show clear evidence of the sale of items, though no mention is made of the method that was employed.

dying knights.¹⁹³ The new mechanism for the sale of a knight's movable property was the *pubblico incanto* (public auction), of objects that could be treated as commodities. Public auctions ensured that the highest price was reached and thus fulfilled a moral purpose, not a commercial one, as the revenue thus attained was to be used by the *Religione*. Part of the revenue generated by the auction would go towards the *Introito* or income that was yielded by a knight's total property, from which the value of the knight's stated will (amounting to a maximum of one-fifth of the value of his property), would be deducted, together with those debts that were still unpaid at the time of his death.

The introduction by the Order of St John, of public auctions in Malta, may have been inspired by the vibrant second-hand markets of Venice and Florence, where auctions provided a crucial means of facilitating the movement and recirculation of household goods, clothing and even works of art and decorative objects.¹⁹⁴ The public auctions led to a new facility in the availability of works of art which may have resulted in a slow but steady growth of the open art market. This is suggested in a comparative analysis of *dispropriamenti* between the last two decades of the sixteenth century and the first two decades of the seventeenth century. Between 1583 and 1603, only seven *dispropriamenti* include any mention of works of art, with an average of five paintings per knight. Between 1604 and 1623, the number of *dispropriamenti* that mention works of art is still that of seven. However the average number of paintings increases to eighteen. These figures suggest a connection between improvements in selling mechanisms and a perceptible swelling in the size of art collections.

The sixteenth-century documents in the *dispropriamenti* archive describe public sales that include paintings amongst the main items of clothing and linen, furniture and weaponry. The auction sale of the property of Fra Jean Chitron that took place in 1583, documents all the items sold, their buyers and the prices paid, including: "*Item, Quattro quadri venduti al Sr Com.r Saccanvilla per scudi sei 6. - / Item altri sei quadri grandi venduti al S.r Franc.o Pas per scudi cinco e tarì sei 5.6.-*".¹⁹⁵ The earliest use of the term '*incanto*' – auction – is first used in a *disproprioimento* of 1593, pertaining to the Castillian knight, Fra Diego de Ouardo. However there is no mention of paintings in the latter documents.¹⁹⁶ An auction held later in the year, pertaining to the *disproprioimento* of Fra Antonio de Quintal,¹⁹⁷ included the sale of paintings that are listed by subject, with their respective price, and the names of three knights who bought the works of art:

¹⁹³ AOM 89, ff.82 r-v, quoted in Cachia, *The Treasury*, 73.

¹⁹⁴ Jack Hinton, 'By Sale, By Gift: Aspects of the Resale and Bequest of Goods in Late Sixteenth-century Venice', *Journal of Design History*, 15: 4, 2002, 246, 255 fn.7.

¹⁹⁵ ACM Sentenze Vol. 1 (1), f.36: entry dated 24 March 1583.

¹⁹⁶ ACM Sentenze Vol. 1 (5), f.12: entry dated 18 September 1593.

¹⁹⁷ ACM Sentenze Vol. 1 (10i), f.132: entry dated 23 May 1593.

<i>Tre quadri a oglio piccoli sono venduti al [...] Federico Paggio per</i>	[...]	1 – 4 –
<i>L'altro al sudetto p. tari sei</i>		– – 6 –
<i>E l'altro a Fra Oratio Mola per tari [...]</i>		1 – 4 –
<i>Il ritratto del defunto vend.to a F. Gio. Cola ad Cardo</i>		– 6 – 2
<i>Altri quadri a ogli il Ecce Homo e San Francesco piu grandi</i>		
<i>Venduti a F. Ant. Maria Caia</i>		3 – 4 –

One of the above-mentioned knights, Fra Oratio Mola, died in Naples in 1615. The documents pertaining to Mola's *dispropriamento* include the sale of two paintings:¹⁹⁸

<i>Un quadro di Mon.ri Verdala vend.to al ... Conservatori Conv.e per</i>	1 – –
<i>Un quadro di S. Giovanni dato al. d[itt]o</i>	– 8 –

A cross-referral of these two sets of documents throw light on Mola's collecting practice observable over a number of years. Another example is that of Fra Antonio de Sousa (d.1695), who bequeathed a painting of the Virgin Mary that he had purchased from the *spoglio* of the deceased Bali Viani.¹⁹⁹

By 1614, the *Gran Corte della Castellania*, the Civil and Criminal tribunals of the Order, engaged professional auctioneers, resulting in a visible improvement in the presentation of the documents concerning the sales and the process of the *dispropriamenti*, leading one to extrapolate that the sales were conducted with better results. Amongst the earlier *dispropriamenti* compiled between 1614 and 1628, one finds the name of the auctioneer Giacomo Liccardo,²⁰⁰ and, in the later documents, that of Stefano Spiletta.²⁰¹ These documents stand out for their uniformity and quality of information, suggesting that these same auctioneers could have overseen the whole process and ensured that the paperwork was completed to a set standard. The documents are also signed off in the same manner (Fig. 110), with the words '*publico pre.cori*' della Gran Corte della Castellania ha riferito p ordine delli Sud.i B.li Comm.ry delli spogli d'haver fatto simile bando come di sopra si contiene nelli lochi publici soliti e consueti di qsta Citta Valletta, multitude populi sono [...] congregate, and[an]te et intelligente'.²⁰² This suggests that the role of auctioneer (*pubblico precursore*) was given official recognition, leading to an early form of professionalisation of the role. While this development may have been triggered by the Order's need to ensure that the full monetary value of the items sold would be reached, it also suggests that this development was in response to a

¹⁹⁸ ACM Sentenze Vol. 3 (5), f.23v: entry dated 29 December 1615.

¹⁹⁹ AOM 931 (2) No.37, f.169v: '*Lascio alla Sig. Donna Isabella moglie di mio nipote il quadro grande della B. Vergine che ho comprato dal spoglio del fu Bagli' Viani, Prior*'. Also, see footnote 132 below.

²⁰⁰ ACM Sentenze Vol. 3 (1), f.3: entry dated 17 November 1614.

²⁰¹ ACM Sentenze Vol 5 (4), f.75: entry dated 27 October 1626.

²⁰² 'The public official of the High Court of the Castellania, having referred to the orders of the commissioners of the spogli, have made similar announcements to that above, held in the usual and customary public locations in this city Valletta, numerous persons have gathered, calmly and well-informed.' ACM Sentenze Vol. 3.

growing market with the demands for greater efficiency in the service provided. That a second person was given licence by the Order's administration to provide this service, infers that the Order's investment in such a service paid off, with greater revenue being generated as a result of an improved way of conducting the auctions.

On a similar, if tangential note, it appears that in the first years of the seventeenth century, work in frame-making in Malta was a lucrative form of business. In the autumn of 1614, a number of artists and artisans travelled from Sicily to Malta to set up business as frame-makers.²⁰³ The respective archival documents relate to licences, a system of permitting artisanal activity that operated within a market arrangement, and which did not depend exclusively on patronage. This peripheral information supports indications of the existence, and possibly growth, of an art market in Malta around the first decades of the seventeenth century.

At the end of the seventeenth century, auctioneers were still being entrusted with the sale of objects from the *Comun Tesoro*. The expenses of the sale of the property of Fra Francesco Spada (d.1677), which were finally paid in 1679, include three entries relating to these services.²⁰⁴ The first is a payment of 44 scudi and 10 tari, to the '*banditore*' (auctioneer) for the estimate and sale of Spada's belongings. The second is the payment of 4 scudi for the transport of the furniture from Spada's residence to the 'Loggia'.²⁰⁵ The third entry is the payment of 12 scudi and 12 tari for drawing up an inventory, assisting at the sale and collecting all the revenue.

Any improvements in the way auctions were conducted would also have had a positive impact on the buyers, with the result that a greater number of persons would be enticed to gather in Valletta to view and purchase the items being displayed. Indeed the public may have participated in auctions through a form of consumption termed 'aspirational',²⁰⁶ merely by gathering to view luxury items without any necessary intent to purchase, yet observing and viewing such items, including works of art in the brief yet accessible episode of the auction situation. The documents state that large numbers of people were present though whether this was the auctioneer's self-publicity or whether it reflected the actual situation may be open to interpretation. Clearly, attracting and managing a crowd, was the responsibility of a licensed auctioneer. The description of the auction also included other services that were necessary for its undertaking, and which were listed as part of the expenses. These would be the services provided by the *banditore* / announcer, the notary who would draw up the contracts of sale and collect the money on behalf of the executors, and the transporters, who were engaged to transport the items for sale from the deceased knight's residence.

²⁰³ NAM, *Magna Corte Castellania: Reg. Revel. Mancip.* f.105v, quoted in Giovanni Bonello, 'Random Notes on Artists related to Malta', in *Histories of Malta VI: Ventures and Adventures*, Malta, 2005, 164.

²⁰⁴ AOM 931 (30) No.4, f.17.

²⁰⁵ The Loggia overlooked Piazza Tesoreria, the square that fronted the Treasury and the Palace.

²⁰⁶ Jack Hinton, 'By Sale, By Gift', 246.

Yet the documents relating to auctions in the first decades of the seventeenth century suggest that sales of works of art were still relatively uncommon, and even then, reflect that only a small number of paintings were sold.²⁰⁷ In these instances not enough information is given to allow one to evaluate the significance of the prices that paintings could fetch. This absence of information does not permit any further observations on the existence of an art market in seventeenth-century Hospitaller Malta.

Conversely, this may also imply that sales of paintings did not, as a general rule, occur solely within the context of public auctions, leaving the possibility of considering other forms of transfer and exchange of works of art governed directly by the *Comun Tesoro*. It is likely that works of art and similar precious items were kept in a separate store and were sold over a longer period of time than that permitted by the immediacy of an auction (Fig. 111). In correspondence with an art collector in Messina, the procurers of the *Comun Tesoro* wrote of ‘*qualche quadri di questa Nostra Cam.a di Pittori insigni*’,²⁰⁸ implying that paintings were kept in a designated area where they could be viewed and evaluated. In another letter to the Messinese art collector, Preti described a painting of *Cleopatra* by Salviati where he was unable to distinguish whether on panel or on canvas, implying a display arrangement that was high up, or at least not within reach of the viewer.²⁰⁹ The implication of a store-display is borne out with one episode that took place in 1734, when paintings by Mattia Preti from the *spoglio* of Fra Stefano Lomellini (d.1699)²¹⁰ were still to be found in storage at the *Comun Tesoro*, having remained unsold. According to Fra Francesco Parisi, a Calabrian knight with an interest in paintings by his compatriot, the valuation of these paintings had been exaggerated, with the result that the paintings did not find a buyer and were deteriorating.²¹¹ The art connoisseur offered to buy the paintings at one-third of their estimated value, and succeeded!

One aspect relating to the storage of works of art held by the *Comun Tesoro* is the absence of any information that states or indicates the role of a keeper entrusted with the task of ensuring their preservation and display. In the case of the magistral collection, it may possibly have been attended to by an artist who enjoyed the favour of the Grand Master of the time. The *Comun*

²⁰⁷ The first noticeable development occurs in 1615, when the auction sale (led by Giacobbo Liccardo) included fourteen paintings, amongst a long list of domestic belongings and weapons. ACM Sentenze Vol. 3 (8), f.61v-62. Entry dated 6 July 1615. This development is sustained in the following years. Before this, auctions would include one or two paintings. ACM Sentenze Vol. 2 (2) and (5).

²⁰⁸ Letter from the *Procuratori del Comun Tesoro* to Don Antonio Ruffo in Messina, dated 1 April 1663, in the Ruffo Archives, quoted in Spike, *Preti: The collected documents*, 159.

²⁰⁹ Letter from Preti to Don Antonio Ruffo in Messina, dated 11 December, 1663, the Ruffo Archives, quoted in Spike, *Preti: The collected documents*, 168-9.

²¹⁰ Lomellini, Prior of England and later of Venice, was a wealthy man and art patron; in 1678 he commissioned the entire redecoration of the Oratory of the Conventual Church by Mattia Preti. The documents relating to the division of his property include an inventory list of 24 paintings, none of which include an attribution other than a still life with flowers by a painter named Stanchi; AOM 931 (32) No. 27.

²¹¹ Giovanni Bonello, ‘Mattia Preti: Painting for a murderer and other stories’, in *Art in Malta: Discoveries and Recoveries*, Malta, 1999, 75-76.

Tesoro does not appear to have had such a facility and may have bought the services of an artist of repute, or depended on the assistance of knight artists on an ad hoc basis. This role would have been entrusted to a person with artistic practice or training, skills that were needed for the restoration of works that needed touching up and for their handling and safe-keeping. This relationship would have existed beyond the documented boundaries of market conditions owing to the knight's noble status.²¹² Knight artists in the lower ranks of the Order, such as the Servant-at-Arms Antoine Favray could provide these services and could hope to receive remuneration for the trouble, though higher ranking artists such as the Knight of Justice, Mattia Preti could not.

By the mid-eighteenth century, auction sales were better documented, although the inclusion of paintings remains relatively uncommon.²¹³ The few instances are interesting for the tangential information that they contain about Maltese art buyers, especially those buyers whose names surface at the sales on more than one occasion, leading one to consider the possibility of a professional interest as art dealers. One auction to be mentioned in this respect concerns the sale of the holdings of the artist-knight Fra Antoine Favray (d. 1798), as it sheds some light on the increased involvement of Maltese persons in the movement of works of art.²¹⁴ The modest list of the French knight's belongings included 23 paintings, that were bought by Francesco Polidano for 3 scudi and 2 tari. This price appears to be inexplicably low for so many works of art which belonged, or were possibly executed by, the most highly sought-after artist in eighteenth-century Malta and suggest that their buyer may have exercised considerable astuteness in concluding the purchase. Another *spoglio* mentions that a knight, Fra Monforte (d.1765), sold his belongings, including paintings, mirrors and furniture, through the services of 'Emmanuele Farrugia, rivenditore' (agent).²¹⁵

Prior to this episode in 1779, Polidano had also been named as a buyer in an earlier auction of the belongings of Fra Giuseppe Raiberti,²¹⁶ when he bought a portrait painting and some furniture. He was also mentioned in that of Fra Bartholomeo Arezzo (d.1797), when he purchased six landscape paintings, for 7 scudi and 11 tari.²¹⁷ Some ten years later, following the turbulent years of the French administration, and the start of the British colonial government, Polidano is mentioned in the *dispropriamento* of one of the three knights who were allowed to

²¹² Refer to Chapter III for a discussion on the Order's acceptance of artists within Hospitaller ranks and their involvement in art-related roles.

²¹³ AOM 949 f.13v: '*Vendita delli Mobili, robbe ed altro spettante allo spoglio del fu Vd Bali Fra Bartholomeo Arezzo morto in convento li 10 Agosto 1797*'. The sale included several items of furniture and only six landscape paintings.

²¹⁴ AOM 949, f.57.

²¹⁵ AOM 928 f.46, '*Notamento della Roba e dei mobili ...dell' Illmo Sig.r Cav.r Monforte. I quadri, specchi che ritrovarsi in queste stanze di mia casea, come pura tutte le sedie, canapé, tavolini, buró, sono di Anna Maria Masini avendo pagato la medesimo di suo proprio denaro ad Emmanuele Farrugia, rivenditore.*'

²¹⁶ Toffolo, 'A Maltese Auction of 1779', 111-117. Francesco Polidano's name is given as a buyer in the auction list on various pages.

²¹⁷ AOM 949, f.13v, '*Sei paesaggi a [Francesco] Polidano 7.11.0*'.

continue living in Malta, Fra Vittorio Vachon de Belmont, who died in 1807.²¹⁸ Polidano is described as *apprezatore*, an evaluator, earning a fee of 17 scudi for giving an estimate to the estate of Fra Vachon de Belmont. The liquidation of the entire *spoglio*, including 51 works of art made up of portraits, devotional subjects and prints, besides other un-named genres, resulted in 37,304 scudi 11 tarì and 9 grani, implying that the Maltese evaluator's skills were successfully employed at a professional level.

One gap in the documentation relating to auctions is the absence of any mention of purchases, of any kind of object, on behalf of the Grand Master. This leaves three possible avenues for the paid acquisition of paintings to embellish the magistral palaces: firstly, through direct purchase, from the private purse of the Grand Master, of paintings kept in the holdings of the *Comun Tesoro*,²¹⁹ secondly, the direct purchase of paintings from art collectors amongst the Maltese and ecclesiastical community;²²⁰ thirdly, the purchase of paintings from overseas collections, possibly mediated by the Order's ambassadors or by Hospitaller knights who were manning the Order's commanderies and priories.²²¹

5.3.6 The hire of works of art

The sixteenth-century writings of Fra Sabba da Castiglione had clearly indicated the measure of knightly expectations.²²² The *dispropriamenti* inventories of paintings and furnishings reveal that in 1613, several decades after the third and last edition was published, Fra Sabba's teachings were still being put into practice. Occasionally, the acquisition of an art collection was accomplished through swifter means than the patient cultivation of well-chosen works. The *dispropriamenti* include a number of art inventories drawn up as part of the lease of a knight's residence. Such instances in the archive signal the reconfiguring of the noble values of Hospitaller knights gradually adapting to early modern societal changes.

Once the noviciate was concluded, the majority of Hospitaller knights rented their lodgings. Their accommodation could range from a modest one or two rooms within the large premises of a langue's auberge,²²³ to a more spacious apartment within a private residence or group of apartments,²²⁴ or even to a magnificent palace on one of the principal streets of the city.²²⁵ The *dispropriamenti* do not include any statements on a knight's living arrangements. However

²¹⁸ AOM 949, f.7 – 22; Polidano's service as evaluator is mentioned in f.15.

²¹⁹ One may hypothesize a magistral right of first choice, although this requires further research.

²²⁰ Art collecting practices amongst Maltese are briefly discussed in Chapter Two.

²²¹ The role of the Order's representatives in Rome and other cities is discussed in depth in Chapter III.

²²² Sabba, *Ricordi*, f.56-57. The advice Sabba gave in '*Circa gli ornamenti della casa*' included various kinds of collections with which to furnish one's residence and in which a Hospitaller knight could take pride, starting with musical instruments, and explaining that such instruments led one to contemplate divine harmony, while delighting the viewer's eye in the craftsmanship of their forms. Refer also to Chapter II.

²²³ AOM 931 (31) No. 30, f.200.

²²⁴ AOM 931 (30) No. 9, f.52 v.

²²⁵ AOM 931 (43) No. 27, f.99-100v.

some inventories indirectly reveal the number and type of rooms that made up that knight's residence, when paintings are listed according to the hall in which they were displayed.²²⁶

Yet, irrespective of the size of the property, the mention of hired paintings as part of some *dispropriamenti* signals that in this period the supply of works of art was a requirement (for the purpose of devotion or embellishment) for the person who acquired the property, as necessary as furniture and furnishings. Conversely, the provision of paintings as part of hired property could attract higher-ranking knights as customers. Fra Geronimo Ribas (d. circa 1730) included a note of the paintings and furnishings which were rented together with his residence.²²⁷ The subjects of these paintings are all devotional themes, and demonstrate the landlords' ability to identify paintings appropriate to Hospitaller knights.

One dazzling example of a lease arrangement is the inclusion of a detailed inventory of 137 paintings that formed part of the rental agreement for palazzo Rospigliosi in Valletta by Fra Gio Battista Brancaccio.²²⁸ An interesting element in the Rospigliosi inventory is the method employed in listing the paintings in order of size: the inventory starts with the largest paintings, four allegories of the seasons that measured 4 ½ *palmi* in height by 6 ½ *palmi* in width, and ends with the smallest, a landscape that measured 2½ *palmi* in height by 3½ *palmi* in width. This factor infers the possibility that such an inventory was drawn up in a store or warehouse where paintings were stacked, not displayed, thereby opening an unusual window into the work practices of art handling in early modern Malta.

Hospitaller knights were permitted by statute to buy property in Malta and overseas, enjoying its usufruct until it accrued to the *Comun Tesoro* at their death. This extended to permission to rent out their property, thereby raising more revenue for themselves and ultimately the Order. Landlord knights had the means to furnish their rented properties with furnishings that matched the expectations of Hospitaller knights seeking accommodation in Malta.

Fra Francesco Alumana (d.1693) indicated that the objects in his residence, including a large gilt framed painting, the Passion of Christ, as well as twelve other gilt framed paintings of varying sizes, were all the property of Fra Gio Battista Giannastasio to whom the house

²²⁶ Refer to to Chapter VII.

²²⁷ 'Nota delli mobili appartenenti alla Sig.ra Catharina e Michele Ciantar sud. Marito quali si trovano nella casa dell' Illmo Gran Prior di Catalogna D. Geronimo Ribas, cioe:/ tre quadri grandi, che si trovano nella camera dove si dorme il detto Gran Priore, cioe un quadro della Madonna e S. Giuseppe, l'altro un quadro della Samaritana, ed il 3.o un quadro di S. Sebastiano / Piu altri sei quadri con i suoi guarnici dorati, che si trovano nella camera degli Visiti cioe un quadro di S. Caietano, 2.o un quadro di S. Antonino, 3.o un quadro di Sta Barbara 4.o un quadro della Madonna delli Dolori 5.o un quadro di S. Michele e 6.o un quadro del Sposalizio di Sta Caterina'. AOM 931 (5) No.14, f.124.

²²⁸ AOM 931 (31) No. 16, f.118. The same palazzo was later leased, from 1697 to 1720, to Fra Ottavio Tancredi; AOM 931 (35) No. 18, f.124.

belonged.²²⁹ Fra Pietro Luigi Gamberini (d.1727) owed sixty-two scudi to Fra Anzilao Mosca, and declared that all the paintings and furniture belonged to the said Hospitaller knight.²³⁰

The *dispropriamenti* imply that paintings could also be hired, yet be described as a loan. In 1688, Fra Francesco Conte de Heiggenslau explained that some paintings in his residence, namely two portraits, of the King of Hungary and of the Grand Master, twelve landscape paintings, a small copper painting of the Madonna, four more paintings and four prints, all framed, belonged to Sig. Carlo Franci, '*il quale me l'ha imprestato solamente al quale siano dati ancora scudi 30*',²³¹ suggesting an arrangement by which the paintings were lent against a regularly-paid fee, or for a sum part of which was still outstanding.

5.3.7 Hospitaller collections '*fuori convento*'

The various mechanisms for the acquisition and transfer of works of art amongst Hospitaller art collectors described above are drawn from the archives of the Order found in Malta. In addition to these documents, other *dispropriamenti* can be found in archives in Italy, France and Spain. Such documents would have belonged to those knights who had been promoted to a Priory or Commandery in the European territories of the Order and who exercised their duty to live there.²³² This may be one explanation for the phenomenon of so many paintings and works of art related to the Order to be found overseas. This is especially true of portraits of knights whose identity is unknown.²³³ This is also true of religious and genre paintings in public collections throughout Europe that depict the insignia of the respective knight who commissioned that painting. Such art collections were also under the jurisdiction of the *Comun Tesoro*, and some were brought to Malta for the embellishment of the magistral palace. For this reason, a brief discussion of such instances is also necessary to illustrate the wider context for the acquisition of works of art in Malta.

Those *Priori* and *Commendatori* who would have ended their lives '*fuori convento*', would have their *dispropriamenti* processed and concluded in the priory which held jurisdiction over

²²⁹ AOM 931 (31) No.35.

²³⁰ AOM 927, f.4v.

²³¹ AOM 931 (43) No.13, f.46.

²³² Priors and commanders were encouraged to take up residence in their territory, and to see to its maintenance. '*I benefici sive precettore della venerabil lingua d'Italia, che sono mancate e venute a meno, la cagione e stata l'assenza elli commendator, sive cavalieri, i quali, senza avere abitato e dimorato in esse, le hanno affittate a fitti anticipati, senz'aver avuto risguardo e considerazione a chi e come.*' Sabba, *Ricordo* 68, *Circa il Dimorare alla Commenda*, f.38. According to Cachia, 'although statutorily obliged to reside in their commanderies, the commanders were generally non-resident, preferring to dwell in the royal or papal court in their vicinity, or to remain '*in convento*', that is, in Malta' Cachia, *Treasury*, 64. Cachia quotes Nicholson, *The Knights Hospitallers*, 80.

²³³ Examples are: '*Portrait of a Knight of Malta*', attrib. Mirabello Cavalori (1535–1572), Blumenthal Bequest, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Accession no. 41.100.5. Margaretta Salinger, 'A Portrait of a Knight', *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 2: 5, January 1944, 164-5; '*A Knight of St John*', c.1528-30, attrib. Polidoro da Caravaggio (c.1499-1543), Wynn Ellis Bequest 1876, National Gallery, London, Inv. NG932, '*Portrait of a Knight of Rhodes*', c.1514 by Francabigio (c.1484-1525), National Gallery, London, Inv. NG1035; Toffolo, *Image of a Knight*, 11.

that territory.²³⁴ The result was that their respective collections were absorbed into the assets of that same priory or commandery. Fra Fabrizio Ruffo (d.1729) described the expenses he undertook in embellishing the Commenda of Fano.²³⁵ He also described how all the belongings that he had inherited from the preceding commander were reinstated according to the description given in the inventory at the time of his entrustment. Fra Giovanni Battista Caracciolo (d.1680) included all the belongings that were to be found in his house in Messina, where he lived as Prior of the Order. His *disproprioamento* included thirteen paintings, mainly on devotional themes, in his house, and twelve figurative paintings of various sizes in the chapel.²³⁶

The Order's Receiver, based in the respective jurisdiction, would have dispersed the belongings kept in Hospitaller residences overseas by engaging local evaluators and selling the collection in the region.²³⁷ Several collections were disposed of in this way, as an efficient means for the *Comun Tesoro* to raise revenue.²³⁸ Those works of art that held a specifically Hospitaller theme, such as magistral portraits, may have been retained for the Commandery.²³⁹ One *disproprioamento* sheds light on the furnishing of the Order's embassies. Fra Giovanni Caravita (d.1699) was engaged as the Order's ambassador to Rome. He stated that the expenses of furnishing the embassy were paid for by his nephew and were covered by a notarial deed which was signed in Naples in 1682.²⁴⁰ A later ambassador for the Order in Rome between 1758 and

²³⁴ King, *The Rule*, 92: Chapter-General of 1288.

²³⁵ AOM 927, f.17, '... avendo esso fatto moltissima spese et ... miglioramenti che sono accorsi in detta comenda [di Fano]; f.20: 'ed essendo riconosciute tutte l'altre robbe esistenti in d.ta casa da luogo a luogo come stanno situate si sono ritrovate nell'isteso modeo e maniera e dell'istessa qualità che stanno descritte nel sudetto preinserto inventario di riserva'.

²³⁶ AOM 931 (30) No.18, f.96v: 'Nella cappella dodeci quadri fra grandi e piccoli di diverse figure'. The paintings in his house may have been sold by his successor to raise revenue for the management of the Priory. However a greater likelihood is that the chapel paintings remained in situ.

²³⁷ The *disproprioamento* of Fra Vincenzo Ferrero (d.1683) in Naples included the cost of engaging the evaluator and art dealer, Carlo Coppola; AOM 931 (30), No. 32, f.183: 'Ha fatto procedere all'apprezzo delle soprad.e robbe mobili da Carlo Coppola presente pubblico rivenditore Napolitano'.

²³⁸ Fra Andrea Piacelli (d.1682) described the belongings that he left in his house in Naples that included around forty paintings of various sizes with gilt frames; AOM 931 (30) No. 26, f.154v. Fra Bartholomeo de Vincentio (d.1690s) described a group of paintings – four paintings based on the Biblical narrative on the Prodigal Son, and nine landscape paintings – that were to be found in his house in Trapani; AOM 931 (32) No.9, f.79v: 'Inventario della casa dove abito ... *'L'Istoria del figlio prodigo'* in Quattro quadri novi / Nove quadri di *paesaggio* sette grandi e due mezzani'.

²³⁹ Fra Bartolommeo Diotallevi (d.1696) drew up a list of his belongings in the Commandery of Villanoieri, including 54 paintings. It is possible that paintings with Hospitaller related subjects, such as portraits of the Grand Master, paintings on the legend of Ismeria, one ship portrait showing the Order's galleon, the 'Capitana', as well as four possibly allegorical representing 'the four corners of the world' suggest that they may have been kept for the commandery; AOM 931 (32) No. 20, f.174 – 174v. Fra Martin de Novar, Grand Prior of Navarra (d.1692), entreated his successor to keep on display the portrait to Grand Master Martin de Redin (1657-1660) in his suit of armour, and asked the knights who lived in the grand priory to take care of the painting. He also entreated the Sacristan of the Priory to keep in situ another portrait of De Redin in the black robes of Grand Master; AOM 931 (3) No. 31, f.305v: 'Il *Ritratto dell'Emm.mo Redin* dipinto armato, desidero, che si tenghi appeso nel Ven.do Priorato di Navarra, senza levarsi da quel luogo e prego alli SS. Cav.ri habitanti nelle case del med.mo Ven.do Priorato d'haverne qualche cura.... Al Sag. Anziano dell'Accennato Ven.do Priorato di Navarra, che si ritrovera' qui in convento, prego che si contenti tenere appresso di se, senza poter alienare, il ritratto del sopranom.to *Emin.mo Redin vestito da Gran Mro* con robba negra, come parimente tenera il libro, quale serve per conferire alli novizij l'habito dell'ordine nostro'.

²⁴⁰ AOM 931 (32) No.33, f.281: '... per sodisfare le spesi della mia Imbasciata di Rome come apare per atto del Notaro Girolamo di Roma, fatto in Napoli sotti i 21 Maggio 1682'.

1778 was Fra Jacques-Laure le Tonnelier, Balì de Breteuil, whose twenty-year residence in the artistic capital of Europe led to the accumulation of an art collection and furnishings that drew the admiration of royalty.²⁴¹ Diplomatic positions assumed a measure of opulence, as a symbolic statement of the status of the Order of St John amongst other state representatives, although the Hospitaller knight thus promoted could not always support this out of his own means, nor, as implied by Caravita, out of the insufficient revenues that were owed to the embassy. This may imply the possibility that the *Comun Tesoro* may have been entreated to send furnishings, including paintings, from its holdings in Malta to enhance the Order's embassies.²⁴²

5.4 Summation

Using the *dispropriamenti* archive as primary material, this chapter has mapped out the various mechanisms specific to the Order of St John, by which Hospitaller knights could acquire works of art. Firstly, the range of mechanisms that enabled a greater supply of paintings and sculptures led to a growing opulence in Hospitaller possessions and lifestyle, reflecting values that were increasingly distant from the Order's religious and military spirit, and in closer proximity to the material culture of a market society. The archives also reveal other mechanisms developed by the *Comun Tesoro* which led to the dispersal of paintings by auction sales. In demonstrating how Hospitaller knights adopted mechanisms that functioned within the Order's regulations, or at their fringe, the study of the *dispropriamenti* has sought to move the discussion on Hospitaller art patronage and collecting beyond the isolation of individual case studies, to a holistic consideration of Hospitaller attitudes to art, which fused the noble values of honour and virtue, with the market values of early modern society.

Secondly, this chapter has also demonstrated how effectively Hospitaller knights maximised the possibilities granted by the *quinto*, in giving expression to their choices in the dispersal of their paintings, thereby re-affirming the importance of status, lineage and bonds of kinship. Hospitaller knights skilfully adapted the possibilities of gift giving that were intrinsic to the *quinto* by means of donating works of art, to mediate a sense of identity within the higher ranks of the Order especially within the court circle of the Grand Master. Hospitaller knights also re-affirmed their noble status through bequests to members of one's family which often saw the return of familial pictures to their country of origin. The gift of paintings also set the seal on friendships, not least in serving as a worthy acknowledgement of favours granted by colleagues and friends, particularly the executors of a knight's *disproprio*mento.

²⁴¹ On Breteuil, refer to Chapter III.

²⁴² For a discussion on the role of the Order's ambassadors with regard to the acquisition and movement of works of art, refer to Chapter III.

VI: TEXTUAL MEANING OF THE INVENTORIES OF HOSPITALLER KNIGHTS

The thrust of the previous chapter was a discussion on how the Order's statutory mechanisms, as mediated by the inventories, bequests, and sales of works of art, pre-determined as well as contributed to the growth and shape of Hospitaller art collections. This chapter aims at a closer interpretation of the inventories, through a brief scrutiny of the language used in the descriptions of the works of art, in a bid to observe the early modern practice of compiling inventories and to reveal more information about Hospitaller art collections. This approach is undertaken as a means of identifying significances and implications embedded within the very choice of words used in the inventories. They will be explored to uncover other points of view on the nature and purpose of Hospitaller art collections.

6.1 Information inherent to Hospitaller inventories

A Hospitaller knight's art collection was a singularly personal expression made out of a choice or a series of choices of works of art that embellished his private residence, the result of an aesthetic formation sown in the collector's early years in a royal or ducal court, and cultivated in his adult years. As novices (or possibly earlier, as pages to the Grand Master), and later as Hospitaller knights, such collectors gravitated around the Grand Master's court in Malta, where the magistral art collection as well as the magistral 'cabinet of curiosities' could be seen, to be absorbed, and later emulated in their own collections.¹ Their respective inventory or list of paintings reflects a life-time's worth of art collecting, and presents a semblance of cohesive assembly in the narrative unity of lists, a textual sequence that approximates, in words, the display of paintings placed one after the other.

Scholars on the history of collecting have recognised that art collecting is in itself an art form, that represents the cultural and aesthetic topography of an art collector's identity.² Rebecca Duclos has underlined the resemblances between collecting practices and personal journeys, showing that 'to create a collection of objects and a compendium of supporting narratives is ... an important means of mapping all manner of journeys. Although the assemblage of things gathered ... may not have followed a decisive pattern of collecting at the time, the group of

¹ Balì Fra Giovanni Filippo Marucelli (d. circa 1769) owned a cabinet that housed his collection of books, drawings and prints, antique and modern medals, statuettes, ivories; AOM 928, f.49: *'un Armario di legno ordinario con cinque palchetti e dipinto a colla conformale, con cornice gialle, con tutto quello che vi e dentro, consistente in cinque o si libri di diverse grandezze con disegni e stampe diverse, medaglie la maggior parte moderna, tutte pero' di bronzo o piombo ed alcune altra anticaglie cioe alcuni idoletti e altre cose di curiosita' ma tutto del gia detto metallo, avorj ma tutti di non molto pleggio'*.

² Burke, *Changing Patrons*, 2004. Jill Burke has shown how an art collector's individual personality is seen to be somehow revealed and embodied by the objects that collector would have paid for.

objects brought together serves as a testament to experiences undergone.’³ The inventories found in the various *spogli* represent the history of a multitude of personal endeavours directed at art collections created and subsequently terminated in sympathy with the life of the individual art collector. Whereas lay collectors of work of art could entertain the notion that their art collection would be kept intact by their heirs, this was not the case for Hospitaller art collectors who were denied the possibility that their collection (representing the knight’s identity) could perpetuate the memory of their lives. Thus the inventories are the only testimony to the quality of the works of art which were assembled by the knights.

Before proceeding with exploring what the inventories say about the substance of Hospitaller art collecting it would be salutary to acknowledge the problem which may arise with interpreting what is written, and what is not. Inventories have been shown to constitute an inherent paradox, creating as many questions as providing answers.⁴ In trying to understand the complexity of Hospitaller inventories, one may follow the model established by Christina Normore, who identified the ‘rhetorical strategies’ inherent in the structure and content of such archival documents.⁵

Firstly, Normore argues, inventories are a normalizing medium, where the individual element is suppressed in favour of a norm that can be understood by third parties. In this respect, although Hospitaller inventories were statutorily expected to be compiled before one’s death, in several instances the *spogli* are sketchily drafted lists, suggesting they were done from memory by a moribund knight. Later, after a knight’s death, these would be supplemented by inventories drafted by another person, possibly the executor of the knight’s will. A notary or a connoisseur would be engaged to give a financial value to the pieces, but not the Hospitaller collector himself.

Secondly, the sphere of knowledge which an inventory is intended to augment is purely administrative, in supporting the financial objective. For example, the regular inclusion of descriptions of frames within the lists of works of art, whether gilt, sculpted, or adorned with tortoiseshell or silver filigree, primarily contributed to the total value that a painting could fetch on the market. Some inventories also included measurements of large paintings, or indications of whether a figure was depicted in half-length or in full-length. Such qualities also contributed to enhancing the market value of a work of art, as suggested by Denis Mahon, who discussed how Italian prices for paintings of figures were also determined, by the artists, according to

³ Duclos, ‘The cartographies of collecting’, 84

⁴ Jessica Keating and Lia Markey, ‘Introduction: Captured Objects - Inventories of Early Modern Collections’, *Journal of the History of Collections*, 23: 2, 2011, 210.

⁵ Normore, ‘On the Archival Rhetoric of inventories’, 7. On the inter-relation between the archive and the historian, refer to Stephen J. Milner, ‘Partial Readings: addressing a Renaissance archive’, *History of the Human Sciences*, 12: 2, pp.89-105.

whether the representation was of a half- or full-length figure.⁶ On the other hand, the inventories are silent on the significance that works of art held for their respective Hospitaller collectors. This lack of comment belies the extraordinary value that was imparted to an art collection, and that can only be teased out through a focused scrutiny of implications embedded in the texts of the *spogli*.

The following is an attempt at recognizing the apparent contradiction inherent in Hospitaller inventories by qualifying the nature of the information they give, in the light of the specific circumstances of the Order of St John. In some instances one might only arrive at qualifying the nature of the questions. With respect to Hospitaller collections, one of the first questions that arises relates to the identity of the person compiling the inventory. Regulations stated that it was the statutory duty of the Hospitaller knight to see that the inventory was compiled each time he was about to leave Malta, and before his death. The knight's personal involvement in the *spoglio* is attested to by the use of the first person in the prose, particularly in the description of the *quinto*, the one-fifth value that Hospitaller knights were permitted to bequeath to the heirs of their choice. Yet on arriving at the faint scrawl of a signature at the end of the sheets of the *spoglio*, a reader would be reminded of the deathly frailty of the Hospitaller knight in whose name the preceding text was written, by a different writer. Several instances of such co-authorships are demonstrated in the writing of the *spogli*. This would suggest that the writing of the *spoglio* was itself a collective endeavour, between a knight recalling personal details from memory, while dictating to a scribe who adapted the information to a more official-sounding format. Occasionally one may detect the involvement of an auditor or auctioneer, in the structure of the inventory itself. Such instances are seen in documents where the listing of inventory is given as contents found in different rooms or halls, or grouped by type such as 'Oro', 'Tesori', 'Mobili', 'Pitture', 'Abbigliamento', etc.

A second example of the type of problem presented by Hospitaller inventories is a structural one, and is mirrored in the way that art collections are far more frequently mentioned in the *spogli* of Italian knights when compared to those mentioned in the *spogli* of French, Spanish and German knights. At face value, this may be interpreted in terms of Italian knights having a greater cultural disposition towards art collecting than knights from other cultural backgrounds, which may be supported by referring to the historical growth of private art collections in Italian states during the Renaissance.⁷ Yet this may also be an incomplete interpretation of an archival anomaly, suggested by the high quality of collections held by French knights such as the Balì de Cordon d'Evieux, Felicien de Savasse, the Balì de Breteuil, Vendôme and Noailles which escaped mention in the *spogli*. It is possible that French knights may have exercised their

⁶ Denis Mahon, *Studies in Seicento Art and Theory*, London, 1947, 54.

⁷ Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Renaissance Italy: From 1400 to the Early Sixteenth Century* Baltimore, 1995; and *Patronage in Sixteenth Century Italy*, London, 1996.

political might within the Order to return their art collections to their homeland in preference to leaving them to the Grand Master or to be dispersed by the *Comun Tesoro*. The lack of documentary evidence prevents any conclusions from being drawn on whether art collecting may have been the favoured practice of Italian knights, or whether French knights held an attachment to maintaining the integrity of art collections through family inheritance.

Another example of the difficulty presented by inventories, relates to the composition of the magistral art collection displayed in the Palace. According to the compilation of paintings given in Chapter IV, the over-riding theme of the magistral collection would appear to be religious or devotional.⁸ However the earliest inventory (1823), of the 145 early modern paintings found in the magistral palace, reveals that only seven images were related to Marian themes,⁹ while another fifteen paintings represented saints and martyrdom scenes. Yet the vast remainder depicted 'secular' subjects and genres. The discrepancy in subject matter between the archival inventories and the early-nineteenth century catalogue highlights the fluidity of movements of collections as well as the relative inadequacy of early modern inventories.

6.2 Intrinsic meanings

Within the inventories that do provide a measure of detail in their listing, one can make out a varied range of intrinsic meanings. The more common straightforward lists are seen to be made up of the title of a painting, its size and its frame, with the occasional description of its state. Ostensibly the main purpose of this information was to describe the means by which pictures could be identified and thereby given their monetary value. Yet the inclusion of these elements also suggests how that information may also be interpreted to give some clue to the cultural preparation of the person drafting the inventory, as well as the ability of the executors and those Hospitaller knights in the immediate circle of friends of the deceased. The full extent of the significance which may be seen in such detailed information can be understood when observing other Hospitaller inventories which only mention paintings in terms of how many there were.¹⁰

⁸ The preference for religious or devotional art is reflected in the majority of Hospitaller inventories which included, at the very least, examples of religious Marian imagery. Refer to Chapter VII for a discussion on the various themes that are illustrated in Hospitaller inventories.

⁹ The most notable of these is the Blessed Virgin by Sebastiano Conca. Schiavone, *I Tesori del Palazzo Magistrale*, Cat. no. 98: 'altro quadro ad olio, alto palmi 4, largo palmi 3, La Beata Vergine, originale del Cav. Sebastiano Conca'. The title in the inventory does not correspond to the subject – the Madonna, Child Jesus and Young St John the Baptist – of another painting by Sebastiano Conca and donated by Inquisitor Passionei to Grand Master Pinto in 1743. Also no. 55: 'altro ad olio (sopra un'altra porta), alto palmi 4, largo palmi 3, La Beata Vergine Addolorata, mezza figura', and no. 116: 'Altro quadro ad olio, alto palmi 3, largo palmi 2, in cattivo stato, La Beata Vergine sedendo, copia della prima maniera della scuola fiorentina'.

¹⁰ For example: AOM 931 (12) No. 2, f.3v: Fra Geronimo Mamo (d.1669), 'sei quadri in fiore / dieci quadri differenti'; AOM 931 (12) No. 12, f.42v: Spoglio Fra Francois Viany De Lissancourt (d.1675), 'plusiers autre tableaux de peu de valeur / deux petites tableaux dans la petite chambre de devant / treize ou quatorze tableaux de peu de valeur / un Christ mort'; AOM 931 (4) No. 22, f.305v: Fra Pinto de Miranda (d.1709), 'Quadri No. 12, tra grandi e piccolo / Nove quadri con l'effigie di S.E. compreso / Quadri quattordici diversi'; AOM 928, f.122v: Fra Don Gennaro Carafa (d.Naples 1794), 'Quadri al no.cinquantatre tra grandi e piccoli'.

6.2.1 *Titles of works of art as listed in the spogli*

The use of conventional or formal titles to describe the subject of a painting, such as those depicting philosophers or historic figures,¹¹ suggests a measure of knowledge that would be necessary in order to recognize figures within a composition or the respective episode being depicted. While one may expect the collector to know the subjects of the paintings in his collection, this was not necessarily the case with the executors of a knight's will, who, in the absence of an inventory after his death, were responsible for the dispersal of his belongings. The latter situation may be one reason for the relative rarity of allegorical, mythological, or historical titles of paintings in Hospitaller inventories, due to the more common instances when inventories were drawn up after the collector's death with the consequent use of less decorative descriptions. The persistence of such lacunae in Hospitaller inventories sustains a skewed perception of knights as men of ready violence as opposed to men of intellect.¹²

6.2.2 *Attributions*

Early modern inventories of art collections give little information on attributions, and Hospitaller *spogli* reveal few exceptions to this Europe-wide tendency. Inventories of royal or ducal collections rarely included the artist's name, as the value of the work of art, was established by the status of its owner and the patronage that thus was conferred.¹³ The rarity of the inclusion of the artist's name may be interpreted as an indication of the courtly education received by a knight, rather than his erudition or aesthetic tastes acquired through intellectual endeavour. For example, only one Hospitaller inventory, that of Fra Bartolomeo del Monte (d.1781), included a book related to art or artists, Giorgio Vasari's '*Le Vite dei piu eccellenti Pittori ...*' although the knight's seeming disposition to art later turns out to be undermined by the mention of only one painting, a portrait of Grand Master Pinto, in his *spoglio*.¹⁴

When lists of paintings are supplemented by artists' names, this strongly suggests that the collector was actively involved in the drafting of the inventory. This may be interpreted as the identification of the collector with the artist in the common understanding of that artist's style and aesthetic values. In the case of Hospitaller portraits by outstanding artists, such as the portrait of Bali Spinola by the French court artist Hyacinthe Rigaud,¹⁵ the inclusion of the artist's name also signifies the sitter's own success (inferring power and influence) at achieving 'access' to the royal artist, and in engaging that artist's attention. Attributions also indicated a

¹¹ Amongst the most detailed inventories, that demonstrate a wide range of pictorial themes and that include artists' names, are that of Fra Gio Battista Brancaccio (d.1686) who listed 238 paintings in Malta, and that of Fra Andrea di Giovanni (d.1715) who listed 95 paintings in Messina, AOM 931 (31) No.16, and AOM 931 (34) No. 25, respectively.

¹² Refer to Chapter VII on the fashioning of Hospitaller identity through portraits.

¹³ Belozerkaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, 76-84.

¹⁴ AOM 928, f.22v: '*Num.ro sette Tomi: Le Vite de Pittori di Giorgio Vasari*'.

¹⁵ AOM 931 (39) No. 36, f.180: '*Il ritratto del celebre pittore Rigo [Rigaud]*'

measure of connoisseurship, in recognizing the greater significance or importance of a painting if executed by an artist of fame, thus adding financial value to the work of art. In his listing of fifteen paintings representing the Mysteries of the Rosary, Fra Cesare Nicoló Losa (d.Torino, 1767) first stated the artist's name – 'Guercino, the artist from Cento' – thus implying that the attribution was more significant than the subject matter, while demonstrating his knowledgeability of the artist's origins.¹⁶ The latter point presents a difficulty in determining whether the connoisseur was the collector, or the executor in charge of drafting the inventory. A study of the form of attributions may reveal a few more clues about the collector: for instance, Fra Andrea di Giovanni included the names of artists in their familiar form rather than in full – 'Poleo', 'Mario fiori', 'Barbalonga' and 'Fra Mattia' – implying the possibility of his familiarity with the artist on a first-name basis.

6.2.3 *The support*

Occasionally, the description of a painting would include a mention of its support, whether on copper, on wood or on marble. The collection of Fra Giovanni Carpane Burló (d. 1671) included three such pieces: 'Madonna, antica sopra tavola ... S. Ger.mo - sopra tavola ... Ecce Homo antico sopra tavola'.¹⁷ Other examples are in copper,¹⁸ marble, or in terracotta.¹⁹ Such descriptions imply a relatively small format of the work of art, yet one that held an element of preciousness in its medium, such as Fra Martin Novar's portrait in gilt copper,²⁰ which was executed by Carlo Troisi (1650-1730), the Order's Master of the Mint. Such materials could also imply a painting's antiquity and relative preciousness, as these media were used by artists before the widespread use of oils on canvas. Such materials also implied the kind of robustness that would be desirable in a painting of portable size, as with other objects that would form part of a sea-faring knight's belongings. Works of art in such materials are shown to be principally of devotional subjects.

6.2.4 *State of preservation*

Less common in the *spogli*, the description could include mention of a painting's state of preservation. Such information would be known to either the Hospitaller knight, or to the catalogue compiler who would be examining the piece at close range. This comment may have been for the benefit of the *Comun Tesoro* which would then have had to consider whether to

¹⁶ AOM 931 (37) No. 37, f.172v: 'Quindici quadri del Guerino da Cento, che rappresentano li Misterij del SS.mo Rosario'.

¹⁷ AOM 931 (28) No. 22, f.136v.

¹⁸ Two examples out of several are found in CAM Vol.3, f.61v: Fra Don Blasco de Giurati (d.1615) 'un quadro di San Geronimo di rame', and AOM 931 (30) No. 24, f.150v, Fra Ignatio Diotallesi (d.1682), 'Una Madonna su rame'.

¹⁹ AOM 928 'H', f.46v: Balì Fra Filippo Marucelli (d. Florence, 1769), 'un quadretto di terra della Robbia [della Robbia?] a' basso rilievo rapp.te un S. Girolamo nel Deserto con cornice gialla filettata d'oro e un'altro basso rilievo rapp.te la Ssma Vergine col Bambino Gesu in braccio. G. Gio Batta e S. Giuseppe'.

²⁰ AOM 931 (3) No. 31, f.305v: Fra Don Martin Novar (d.1692), 'Ritratto mia sopra piancia di rame dorato, fatto da Carlo Troisi'.

restore the painting in order to improve its chances of fetching a better price on the market. One such instance is that of a painting in the collection of Fra Giuseppe Maria Cicinelli (d.Naples, 1780), described as, '*La Deposizione di Gesu morto in seno della Beatissima Vergine di buona mano che deve ristaurarsi per essere molto antica*'.²¹

Occasionally, the inventory listing includes the mention of a painting being very old, '*antico*' or '*vecchio*'. While this too might merely be a statement of a poor state of preservation, it could conversely connote a value attached to its antiquity. In the above-mentioned inventory belonging to Cicinelli, a number of works are singled out for their age, suggesting that their antiquity imparted value to them.²² As a form of dating a work of art, such descriptions also invite the consideration of whether the painting held any significance relating to its older history, or to its (implied) rarity and therefore its value. This may similarly be the case with paintings that are described as 'Greek', meaning Byzantine, and therefore probably icons which would have been valued for their antiquity as well as for their venerable theme, such as the '*Tre pezzi di quadri greci*' in the collection of Fra Antonio de Lucia (d.1667),²³ and the '*Sei quadretti piccoli pinti alla Greca*' in the collection of Fra Marcello Scalzo (d.1684).²⁴

6.2.5 The frame

The title of a painting would often be accompanied by a description of its frame. Occasionally, frames appear to have been attributed a greater value when the paintings are simply indicated by their number, while effort is spent on describing whether their frames were gilt in silver or gold. At face value, the inclusion of information about the frames could be a simple acknowledgement of the appropriate way in which paintings were displayed, with the frame enhancing the completeness of the piece. It may also be an acknowledgement of the expense invested into the frames that were covered in precious or rare materials such as tortoiseshell, gold or silver gilding, or made of expensive wood such as ebony. Both considerations would enhance the monetary value of the works of art listed in the inventory.

The *spogli* also occasionally reveal the care with which a painting was protected, in the form of a curtain and rail in front of a work of art. Such a measure had been recommended by Giulio Mancini in his 1620 treatise, '*Considerazioni sulla Pittura ...*' for two reasons: primarily as a conservation measure to protect a painting from dust and humidity, and secondly, to integrate a theatrical element of surprise on drawing the curtains open and revealing the work of art; the latter also imparted an air of preciousity to the work of art by establishing a sense of privilege in

²¹ AOM 931 (38) No. 31, f.128v.

²² AOM 931 (38) No. 31, f.128v: '*Nro Signore della Deposizione dalla croci con molte figure in buon stato tanto per la pittura che per la tela / Arazzi grandi di Fiandra antichi con figure al naturale, due*'. Also, one painting listed in the collection of Fra Don Andrea Minutolo (d.1747), '*S. Geronimo, antico*', in AOM 927, f.230.

²³ AOM 931 (28) No. 13, f.92

²⁴ AOM 931 (30) No.35, f.191v.

the viewer's eyes.²⁵ In the *spoglio* of Fra Don Geronimo de Sousa (d.1625) the modest inventory includes 'un quadretto piccolo della Madonna con sua coperta di taffeta'.²⁶ A similar entry is found in the inventory relating to Fra Vincenzo Riccio (d. Malta, 1718) where the description of works of art includes the mention of the curtain rail and green taffeta fabric that accompanied the painting of Our Lady of Trapani.²⁷ It would also appear that De Sousa and Riccio were familiar with Mancini's recommendations on the most suitable fabric with which to cover a painting to achieve maximum effect in the viewer's eyes,²⁸ that is to choose a fabric that is either green or flesh in tone, and in taffetà or silk-based material, to enhance the significance of the painting and to ensure ease in drawing the curtain open.

6.2.6 Measurements and size

The more detailed inventories also included measurements. The size of paintings listed in an inventory would have had a bearing on the estimate of the price to be sought at market.²⁹ Inventories that include measurements of paintings would suggest that they were compiled by professional cataloguers, conversely also implying that the collection was of a quality and volume that demanded professional services to be able to do justice to its worth.

Descriptions of the size of paintings, range from relatively simple terms such as 'piccolo' or 'grande', to actual dimensions given in 'palmi',³⁰ and may reveal a few clues to the living environment of a Hospitaller knight. Large paintings, such as full-length portraits, required high walls and implied their display within a palazzo or lavish-sized apartment. In other words, the inclusion of dimensions of large paintings indicated that the collector had the means not only to collect large paintings, but also to display them in grand surroundings. A similar interpretation may be given to small-sized works of art, usually indicated as 'quadretti' or 'quadri piccioli'. Paintings of such dimensions tend to be devotional paintings found inside more intimate spaces, such as besides a Hospitaller knight's bed, 'al capezzale' or 'all'alcova',³¹ or in restricted

²⁵ The icon of Our Lady of Philermos, displayed inside its own chapel within the Conventual church and venerated by the Order of St John ever since its time in Jerusalem, was also kept covered with a veil. AOM 235, *Traittato della Maggio chiesa Conventuale di S. Gio / opera del Comend.re fra Gio Dom.co Manso* (1698) f.27-8.

²⁶ ACM Sentenze Vol. 4, f.175v.

²⁷ AOM 931 (35) No. 3, f.45v: 'L'Immagine di Nra Signora di Trapani con il suo velo di tafitá verde e ferramenti'

²⁸ 'Del color di queste mi parrebbe a proposito il verde e l'incarnato e, per reputatione della pittura, l'ermesino o taffeta o altra material di seta che sia arrendevole e mobile'; Mancini, 'Regole per comprare collocare e conservare le pitture' in De Benedictis and Roani, *Riflessioni ...*, 51.

²⁹ Federico Etro and Laura Pagani, *The Market for Paintings in Baroque Venice*, Working Paper Series No. 191 (July 2010), Dipartimento di Economic Politica, Università degli Studi di Milano – Bicocca, - <http://dipeco.economia.unimib.it/repec/pdf/mibwpaper191.pdf> (viewed 28 November 2011) p.15. Also, Mahon, *Studies in Seicento Art and Theory*, 54. This held also for Dutch artists; Marten Jan Bok, 'Pricing the Unpriced: How Dutch Seventeenth-Century Painters determined the Selling Price of their Work', in *Art Markets in Europe 1400-1800* ed. by Michael North and David Ormrod, Aldershot, 1999, 105.

³⁰ One *palm* was approximately 22.34 centimetres. Salvatore Battaglia, *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana* (Torino, 1984) p.431: 'Unità di misura lineare di modesta entità, in uso prima dall'adozione del sistema metrica decimale e avente valore variabile a secondo dei luoghi e dei tempi, in media intorno a 25 cm (a Cagliari valeva 22.2 cm, a Roma 22.3 cm, a Genova e a Sardegna 22.2cm, in Sicilia 25.8cm, a Napoli 26.4cm)'

³¹ AOM 931 (3) No. 31, f.305: Disp. Fra Martin de Novar (d.1692), 'tre quadrettini vicino al capezzale'; AOM 931 (35) No. 19, f.143: Fra Silvio Sortino (d. 1721), 'La V[ergine]. San Gio[vanni] e Gesu' al capezzale'; AOM 931 (5) No. 19, f.147: Fra Giuseppe d'Aragonas (d.1720s), 'Sma Annunciata sopra piangia di rame al capezzale',

spaces such as one's living quarters on a ship.³² This conforms with the recommendations given by Giulio Mancini at the turn of the seventeenth century, on the display of sacred works of art within one's rooms in private residences of modest means: '*le cose di devotione si metteranno nella camera, le cose allegre e profane nella sala, con riguardo ancor nelle sacre che le cose piccolo a capo alletto et ingionecchiatori, il Christo, Vergine e simil altre in faccia alla porta dell'entrata, acciò quello che entra si ricordi che quello é luogo riserbato e di devotione.*'³³ Occasionally from the number or type of furniture described, one may also deduce the room as being a study, or forming part of an apartment of two or three rooms,³⁴ as could be expected inside an auberge.³⁵

6.2.7 Display arrangements

Some inventories, especially those of large collections, were listed according to the *rooms* in which the works of art were displayed.³⁶ The *spoglio* belonging to Fra Domenico Cleria (d.1695) reveals that fourteen still life paintings and two landscape paintings were displayed in the main hall, twelve paintings of saints and six other landscapes were displayed in his bedroom with an '*Agnus Dei*' close to his bed.³⁷ On the ground floor one private room (*camera da basso*, possibly a study) was decorated with aerial landscape paintings as well as three devotional paintings, while another room held a large painting of the entire Island of Malta, together with four other landscape paintings, as well as two small devotional paintings. Another room was designated the Hall of Portraits (*Sala de Ritratti*), which included portraits of Grand Masters Carafa and Cottoner, as well as of Cardinal Carafa. The choice of displaying the still life and landscape paintings in the public space of the Main Hall, the perspectival paintings in the study

³² AOM 929, f. 20, Fra Jean de Barthelemy de Ste Croix (d.1683): '*Huit petits tableaux dorés pour la galère*'

³³ Mancini, '*Regole per comprare collocare e conservare le pitture*', de Benedictis and Roani, *Riflessioni*, 47. (Translation: Devotional subjects should be placed in [private] rooms, cheerful and profane subjects in the hall, in the case of sacred subjects smaller pieces should be close to the head of a bed and close to prie-dieus, Christ, the Virgin and similar others should face the entrance to the room, so that he who enters will note that this is a private room for private devotions).

³⁴ AOM 931 (35) No. 9, f.74, Fra Vincentio Galleanti (d. Malta, 1720): *Dichiaro che nelle due stanze cioè nella stanza dove ci dormo una buffettina, un ginocchiatore et una tavola vecchia quali sono miei anche i quadretti del capezzale, et altri che ci sono dentro detta stanza. La robba che vi é nella Sala ... due figure di gesso mezzi busti ... alcuni quadretti di carta.*

³⁵ The *disproprio* of Fra Cesare Leognano (d.1701) included the rent of three rooms within the *auberge* of the *langue* of Italy. His *spoglio* included three paintings: a small *tondo* of a Madonna and sleeping child, another small Madonna and Child, and a portrait of himself; AOM 931 (32) No. 35, f.299v. Fra Carlo Costiole (d.1752) lived in the *auberge* of the *langue* of Italy, and owned two portrait paintings; AOM 931 (37) No. 12, f.49.

³⁶ Some inventories that listed paintings by room: AOM 931 (34) No. 24, f.168v-190, Fra Giuseppe Maria Marchese Marini (d.1712); AOM 931 (35) No. 2, f.31-37v, Fra Nicolo Bonaventura di Lomellino (d.1717); AOM 931 (35) No. 9, f.74, Fra Vincentio Galleanti (d. Malta, 1720); AOM 931 (38) No. 10, f. 32-38v, Fra Guidotto Casamassimi (d. Bari, 1776); AOM 928 (H) No. 40, f. 66; Fra Maurizio Pansier (d.Malta, 1787).

³⁷ AOM 931 (32) No. 12 f.137v-138, Fra Domenico Cleria (d. 1695, Malta): '*Nella Sala / Quatri grandi di frutti con la cornice a forma di tartuca - 9 / Piu' altri piu piccolo similmente con la cornice di Tartuche - 5 / Piu altri con la cornice a serpe indorato paesaggi tutti li predetti di Stefano - 2 / Li mobili che sono nella camera et alcove / Quatri grandi con le cornice indorato di Santi otto - 8 / Piu sei paesaggi di Stefano ... - 6 / Piu altri quatri ... similmente di santi piu piccolo - 4 / Piu un'altro quatro ... per il capo del letto con l'agnus dei - 1 / Piu un altro sopra la porta dell' [...] - 1 / nelle due camera di basso / Quadri sei paesaggi di prospettive - 6 / Più una Madonna ... e due altri quatri di S. Dom.co e S. Nicola ... - 3 / Nell'altra camera / Una quatro grande del'isola di Malta e quatro paisagi ... / Due quatretti ... della Madonna e l'altro di Nro Sig.re / Piu ... ritratti che sono alla Sala de ritratti delli Em.Carafa e Cottoneri - 2/Uno il ritratto del Cardinale Carafa - 1.*

and the devotional paintings in the meditative privacy of his bedroom, as well as the grouping of portraits in a designated hall, suggests that Cleria was familiar with contemporary conventions on the appropriateness of themes to be displayed in the different rooms of a *palazzo*, and that he observed the segregation of private and public uses of works of art. Another Hospitaller collection, belonging to Fra Pietro Daratas Naza y Rocamora (d.1703) in Valencia, was similarly displayed in different rooms.³⁸ The corridor used by the family displayed four landscape paintings and another of ships' portraits, while paintings of Hospitaller saints and other saints were displayed close to the oratory. Other paintings are listed without any location being indicated. Although the paintings listed in the *spoglio* amounted to forty-one, and were predominantly religious in character, the instances where their location is given indicate that their display was in keeping with contemporary conventions.

Other *spogli* which note the location sometimes include a designated gallery space. The *spoglio* of Fra Gio Batta Brancaccio (d. 1687) lists the inventory by hall, including a '*Galleria*' that housed several paintings of allegories, biblical themes, landscapes, figures and still life paintings,³⁹ while the *spoglio* of Fra Giuseppe Maria Cicinelli (d. 1780) describes the belongings of his palazzo in Naples, listing works of art by location, including a '*Galleria*' which housed seventeen paintings on religious themes as well as history paintings, allegories, and a portrait.⁴⁰ Such conventions which guided collectors on the display of works of art, were the subject of a chapter in the treatise by Giulio Mancini '*Considerazioni ...*',⁴¹ and were widely known among connoisseurs and collectors by the turn of the eighteenth century in Siena, Florence, Venice and London.⁴² These practices were also clearly known to Hospitaller knight collectors.

6.3 Summation

The new information presented in this chapter points to new areas of research on Hospitaller art collecting. Firstly, the inventories raise a question that concerns the predominance of paintings over other art forms. Drawings and engravings are rarely listed in the inventories, even those

³⁸ AOM 931 (4) No. 10 f.129-133, Fra Pietro Daratas Naza y Rocamora (d. Valencia, 1703): three paintings were located in the '*Sala*', five were displayed in the '*Coredon de la Familia*', and sixteen were displayed in the '*Oratorio*'.

³⁹ AOM 931 (31) No. 16, f.87: Twenty-five paintings in the *Galleria* are listed by subject, to indicate those that were to be acceded to the Order as part of the *disproprioamento*, while the remainder belonged to Prince Rospigliosi, from whom the palazzo was leased: '*tutto il resto de quadri é del Pr.e della Casa*'.

⁴⁰ AOM 931 (38) No. 31, f.135v-156v, Fra Giuseppe Maria Cicinelli (d. Naples, 1780). The paintings belonging to Fra Cicinelli numbered one hundred and thirty-four. Other inventories that include works of art displayed within a '*Galleria*' are: Fra Michele Frisari (d. Naples 1776) in his Naples palazzo, the gallery paintings, fourteen in all, were made up of figures, landscapes, and floral still-lives; AOM 931 (36) No. 18, f.182; Fra Ettore Marulli (d. Naples, 1763) too had a *Galleria* in his palazzo however only two paintings, landscapes, are listed therein; the rest of the collection, numbering 183, were displayed in a series of rooms leading to his private chamber (*Galleria, Prima Anticamera, Seconda Anticamera, Terza Anticamera, Camera del Letto* – that held over one seventy miniatures, *Quarto Piccolo Sala, Anticamera, Terza Stanza, Prima Camera*); AOM 931 (36) No.31 f.266-268.

⁴¹ Mancini, '*Regole per comprare, collocare e conservare le pitture*' in De Benedictis and Roani, *Riflessioni*, 43-53.

⁴² De Benedictis, *Per la Storia del Collezionismo*, 14.

describing grand collections, a lacuna that may be due to the terminology used in the compilation of Hospitaller inventories. In an analysis of early sixteenth-century Venetian property inventories, Chriscinda Henry has shown that the term '*quadro*' could denote almost anything that could be framed and hung on a wall, including prints.⁴³ In Hospitaller *spogli*, the occasional reference to paper as a pictorial support is the only indication of a drawing or print.⁴⁴

Secondly, the Hospitaller inventories also reveal that paintings by far outnumber sculptures, and thus prompt a number of questions: Could the high cost of the materials required for marble or bronze sculpture have had an impact on the availability of the art form?⁴⁵ Alternatively, could the relative absence of sculpture be related to Hospitaller collectors' choices, indicating a cultural preference for paintings over sculpture? Future studies on these lacunae may invite comparison with the early sixteenth-century exhortation by Paolo Cortesi for Cardinals to avoid the display of sculptures in their palaces and to opt for pictorial decoration instead.⁴⁶ On the other hand, the anomaly may be related to the *dispropriamento* process itself and the normalizing medium of the Hospitaller inventory. Any research on the presence of works of art in forms other than paintings in Hospitaller collections would therefore require alternative sources of information.

This chapter has thus demonstrated a second method by which to approach Hospitaller archives, by extracting information from the types of descriptors used in the compilation of the inventories. As with the first method employed in Chapter V, wherein conclusions could be drawn on the way the Order's statutes shaped the growth of Hospitaller art collections, the second methodology permits the extraction of further information that illuminates the values implied in the wording of the inventories themselves and suggests new avenues of research on Hospitaller collections. The forthcoming chapter employs a third methodology which focuses on the subjects of the works of art listed in the inventories, and aims at completing this study on how Hospitaller art collections provided a powerful means of self-fashioning and identity.

⁴³ Chriscinda Henry, 'What makes a picture? Evidence from sixteenth-century Venetian property inventories', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 23: 2, 2011, 253-265.

⁴⁴ AOM 931 (1) No. 6, f.18: Fra Antonio Moset (d. 1670), '*Seis laminar con la guarnicion de ebano*'; AOM 931 (28) No. 4, f.15v: Fra Mariano Melandrino (d.1654), '*Carti grandi con figure*';

⁴⁵ The rare inclusion of statues may have been prompted by the preciousness of the medium that would have enhanced the value of the work of art independently of the artistry. One example is the inventory belonging to the French knight, Fra Francois Budes Tertre Joan (d.1674) that included six statues in alabaster, as well as an unspecified number of paintings: '*trois statues d'albastres ... un cheval abbatu par un lyon qui lui saut en croupe, un charité, e la troisieme est composé de trois figures ... quantité de tableaux ...plus trois statues d'albastre*'; AOM 931 (12) No. 3, f.8v-9.

⁴⁶ Kathleen Weil-Garris, and John F. D'Amico, 'The Renaissance Cardinal's Ideal Palace: A Chapter from Cortesi's *De Cardinalatu*' in *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, 35, 1980, 95.

VII: THE HOSPITALLER ART COLLECTIONS

This chapter discusses the artistic contents of individual Hospitaller art collections which are, to date, known only from the inventories which accompanied the *dispropiamenti* of various Hospitaller knights. The large number of *spogli* which include works of art, permit a comparative study of the contents of individual Hospitaller inventories. This study leads to observations on thematic patterns, and allows for the consideration of characteristics that may qualify an art collection as specifically 'Hospitaller'. Themes which were frequently mentioned in Hospitaller collections are explored for their possible significance within the social and historical contexts specific to the Order of St John. Observations on pictorial subjects and themes which stand out amongst the titles of paintings listed in all the inventories, aim at a contextualized understanding of Hospitaller choices and preferences in art.

The findings are presented in two parts. The first part deals with religious art, namely paintings and sculptures depicting devotional themes and martyrdom scenes. It discusses how such representations relate to the monastic dimension of Hospitaller knighthood and self-identity. The second part deals with secular themes, such as portraits, landscapes, battle-scenes and literary themes. This second part demonstrates how these genres act as symbolic markers of the public lives of Hospitaller knights as well as indicators of their private tastes and choices of the art with which they surrounded themselves. Where relevant, works from the magistral collection are presented for comparison. The findings are supplemented by information derived from nineteenth-century inventories, as well as other secondary sources, that relate to those works of art known to have a Hospitaller provenance and which currently form part of the national art collection of Malta. The chapter concludes with a discussion on how Hospitaller art collecting was linked to self-identity, with a focus on the correspondence between art collecting and masculinity.

7.1 Genres in Hospitaller art collections

The numerous Hospitaller inventories that include titles of works of art also reveal the predominance of certain genres or subjects and the near total absence of others. The composition of the magistral art collection discussed in Chapter IV demonstrates an equal number of devotional paintings and of portraits, with both genres outnumbering landscapes, battle scenes, allegories, still lifes and others. Private Hospitaller collections reveal a similar trend, with notable exceptions amongst the larger collections encompassing a wider range of

themes, containing allegories, secular history painting, and mythological subjects.¹ The emergence of a thematic pattern in the *spogli* leads to the consideration of Hospitaller art collections as a generic type that favoured some themes over others. This thematic study also presents a consideration of art collecting as a determining factor in Hospitaller self-identity, attained by means of pictorial forms and visual expressions of Hospitaller piety as well as through the symbolic representation of secular interests and aesthetic choices leading to the shaping of Hospitaller taste.

7.2 Art collections - 1: Worldly goods and monastic piety

The vast majority of Hospitaller inventories of works of art include devotional images. Marian images such as the Virgin Mary or Madonna and Child Jesus, predominate, while some titles occasionally mention other figures, namely the young St John the Baptist, and/or St Joseph. Other frequently mentioned devotional images are those of various saints, as well as of the Crucifixion and of other martyrdom scenes. The presence of so many images of sacred art may be taken for granted amongst members of a religious and military Order, particularly in the years of the Counter-Reformation. Scholarly literature on religious art has traditionally focussed on the commissioning of works of art in public spaces, mainly churches. This study permits the consideration of religious art and its position within a focus group of private art collections, in order to shed new light on the meaning of religious art within early modern Hospitaller culture.

Only a handful of inventories drawn up prior to 1600 include any mention of works of art, of which very few are devotional images. In the first decades of the seventeenth century, devotional images start to be mentioned with greater frequency, as the inventories grew more numerous and started to contain detailed information. There are various reasons to explain the change in the number and quality of the inventories.² For the purpose of this chapter it is relevant to highlight the temporal sequence that may be seen with the establishment of the Jesuit College in Valletta in 1592 and the growing incidence of devotional art in Hospitaller inventories at the start of the seventeenth century.

¹ The largest art collections with a wide range of themes as indicated in the following *dispropiamenti*; AOM 931 (31) No.16: Fra Gio Battista Brancaccio (d.1687), 238 paintings; AOM 931 (36) No. 31, ff.266-86: Fra Ettore Marulli, (d.1763), 183 paintings; AOM 949 f.68-74: Fra Ignazio Argotte (d.1796), 149 paintings; AOM 931 (38) No. 31, ff.128v-138v: Fra Giovanni Cicinelli (d. 1780), 134 paintings; AOM 931 (43) No. 25 ff. 214-6: Fra Andrea di Giovanni (d.1715), 98 paintings; AOM 931 (4) No. 9: Don Emanuel Arias (left the Order in 1703), 83 paintings; AOM 931 (28) No. 22: Fra Giovanni Carpane Burló (d.1671), 80 paintings; AOM 931 (37) No. 16: Fra Gio Francesco Gori (d.1755) with 76 paintings,; and Fra Don Balì Luigi d'Almeyda (d.1797) with 71 paintings, AOM 949, f.36-48; and AOM 931 (31) No. 9: Fra Gulio Sortino (d.1686), 60 paintings.

² Refer to Chapter V, 'Purchases and Sales' for a discussion of the art market in Malta, and the engagement of professional auctioneers by the *Comun Tesoro* in 1614.

The Jesuit College had been founded in Valletta,³ during the reign of Verdalle, a Grand Master who had enjoyed a good education in his youth.⁴ Until the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1768, the college was instrumental in the education of Malta's social elite. In 1655, the College initiated a programme teaching mathematics and fortification design targetted at Hospitaller knights,⁵ as well as mathematical knowledge for other disciplines.⁶ A number of factors highlight the need to evaluate the influence exerted by the Jesuit Order on the Order of St John, in view of the privileged access that Jesuits had to Hospitaller knights, starting early with the latter's education in Jesuit schools in the *seminaria nobilium*, Jesuit colleges established to form leaders out of Europe's nobility.⁷ These colleges also 'primed young patricians to create galleries in their own palaces, in imitation of the practices they had learned to value at school and seen in the homes of older men who had been their mentors'.⁸ Such influence may have been mediated through paintings acting as gifts between Jesuits and knights or as devotional imagery within the scope of the Jesuits' teaching programme.

In common with Hospitaller knights, Jesuits too were soldiers in the fight against Protestantism and Islam, following the example of the Order's founder, St Ignatius of Loyola. Jesuits were always 'ready to serve as soldiers of God beneath the banner of the Cross' so as 'to serve the Lord alone and the Church his spouse under the direction of the Roman pontiff as the vicar of Christ on Earth'.⁹ Although they held a vow of poverty, their educated background ensured the relative ease with which they mingled amongst other noblemen and taught their sons, particularly in centres of political power.¹⁰ One famous Jesuit, Athanasius Kircher (1601/2-1680) accompanied the Landgrave Friedrich of Hessen-Darmstadt to Malta in 1637, when the latter had just joined the Order of St John (Fig. 112). Kircher was father-confessor to the young convert,¹¹ and during his time in Malta he spent one year teaching Mathematics while pursuing his studies in geology.

³ Pio Pecchiai, 'Il Collegio dei Gesuiti in Malta', *Archivio Storico di Malta*, 9, 1939, 129-202, 272-325.

⁴ Alain Blondy, *Hugues de Loubens de Verdalle, 1531-1582-1595, Cardinal et Grand Maître de l'Ordre de Malte*, Paris, 2005, 14-15. Verdalle was raised in Toulouse.

⁵ One of the students was the young Fra Don Manuel Arias, later Archbishop of Seville (1702), and who wrote 'Problemi Geometrici'. Denis De Lucca, *Jesuits and Fortifications: the Contribution of the Jesuits to Military Architecture in the Baroque Age*, Leiden, 2012, 263. Arias (1638-1717) had a large art collection that included aerial views of Valletta.

⁶ Mathematical knowledge was also imparted in the subjects taught were cartography, astronomy, horology, siegework operations, military instrumentation, ballistics as well as logistics, geography, economics, drill geometry, and even 'the art of dying well'; De Lucca, *Jesuits and Fortifications*, 75.

⁷ Gian Paolo Brizzi, *La formazione della classe dirigente nel sei-settecento: 'seminaria nobilium' centro-settentrionale*, Bologna, 1976, 24-27.

⁸ Findlen, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting and Scientific Culture*, 98-101.

⁹ George E. Ganss, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, St Louis, 1970, 66.

¹⁰ In his instructions to future missionaries in the Constitutions (1552) Ignatius of Loyola exhorted Jesuits to focus their energies on princes and other 'important and public persons' ... if the Society could convert the prince, then his subjects would naturally follow. Also, Ignatius recognised the importance of obtaining the financial support of wealthy patrons, and he instructed his followers to make wise use of such potential benefits. Thomas M. Lucas, *Saint, Site and Sacred Strategy*, Rome, 1990, 124, quoted in Gauvin Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542-1773*, Toronto, 1999, 186.

¹¹ John E. Fletcher, 'Astronomy in the Life and Correspondence of Athanasius Kircher', *Isis*, 61: 1, Spring 1970, 52-67.

By the mid-seventeenth century, the Jesuit Order in Malta engaged the Order's military architect, Francesco Buonamici (1596-1677) to design its College and Church on a site in very close proximity to the Palace of the Grand Master. The Jesuit church has a grand *reredos* framing its high altar painting The Circumcision that had earlier been executed by Verdalle's court artist, Filippo Paladini. Historically, the Jesuits had harnessed the visual arts in their missions, by 'making accommodation a cornerstone of their approach to the arts. ... They actively encouraged the blending of Western art with local, indigenous traditions right into the eighteenth century.'¹² Similarly, within Europe, Jesuit foundations tended to adapt to the styles and techniques of art and architecture of whatever region they found themselves in.¹³ This kind of approach allowed the Jesuits to integrate successfully within the territories where their churches were founded, and Hospitaller Malta was no exception.

In the late sixteenth century some Jesuit devotional practices did promote types of imagery that, if not exclusively Jesuit, were at least more favoured by the Society than by any other religious organisation, and on the whole had a powerful impact on European religious culture. Gauvin Bailey has singled out martyrdom cycles, a theme which would have held resonance with Hospitaller knights in their liminal position between Christendom and Islam. Not unlike the risks faced by Jesuit missionaries,¹⁴ such as those depicted in the altarpiece inside the Jesuit church, The Martyrs of Nagasaki (Fig. 113) by Stefano Erardi (1630-1716), the pictorial theme of martyrdom was pertinent to those knights, who were periodically faced with expectations of an Ottoman attempt at taking Malta, and who regularly risked their lives on the *corso*, seeking battle with Turkish ships in the name of *La Religione*. In addition, images of Jesuit saints such as St Ignatius, Francis Xavier (both canonized 1622), Stanislas Kostka and Aloysius Gonzaga (c. 1726) are specific to the Jesuit Order, but are also found in some Hospitaller art collections.¹⁵

One other devotional theme which suggests links between Hospitaller knights from Spanish territories and members of the Jesuit Order relates to the imagery of angels, through the paintings on angelic themes to be found in private Hospitaller collections, as well as the more publicly-visible altarpieces in chapels of the Order's churches. Although the Tridentine reforms condemned the invocation of angels named in Jewish prophecies other than the names of

¹² Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit missions*, 10.

¹³ Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit missions*, 43.

¹⁴ Far Eastern adventures generated a whole genre of mission literature which had a tremendous impact on Catholic Europe at all levels. Best-sellers in their day, these tales of Christian heroism in exotic lands were largely responsible for an unprecedented rise in membership in the Society of Jesus. For the first time, becoming a missionary to Asia was a goal with comparable merit to battling Protestants in the North; Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit missions*, 53.

¹⁵ AOM 931 (31) No. 9, f.46: Fra Gulio Sortino (d.1686), *Sto Ignatio*; AOM 931 (28) No. 22, ff.135v, 136, 136v: Fra Carpena Burló, *Un Ritratto Gesuito, Ritratto di uno Gesuita - quadretto sopra rame, S. Francesco Saverio and Sto Ignatio*; AOM 928, f.34: Fra Antonio de Ildaris, *Sto Isidoro, S. Ignazio Loyola, S. Francesco Saverio, S. Filippo Neri, e di S. Teresa, canonizzati dal Som.o Pontefice Gregorio XV*; AOM 931 (32) No. 8, f.69v: Fra Luigi Venati (d.1693), *S. Francesco Saverio*.

Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, the prohibition was not observed in Baroque Spain.¹⁶ Ramon Mujica Pinilla has shown how Spain remained central to the dissemination of paintings of the seven angels of the Apocalypse in the New World, with the Jesuits as the main propagators.¹⁷ In Malta, the Italian knight and Secretary of the *Comun Tesoro*, Fra Cesare Lopez included in his inventory one painting depicting the Seven Archangels.¹⁸ He later bequeathed the painting to Fra Gregorio Caraffa, Prior of Roccella and later Grand Master.¹⁹ Little is known of Lopez's background, although it is likely that, like Caraffa, he hailed from southern Italy which formed part of the Spanish kingdom.

As a Jesuit pictorial theme, the Guardian Angel attributed to the Neapolitan caravaggist, Hendrick Van Somer (c.1607-1684), was also prominently displayed as an altarpiece, inside the Jesuit Church in Valletta.²⁰ The same theme also appears in Hospitaller art collections, such as that belonging to Fra Don Manuel Arias in Seville.²¹ A painting by Mattia Preti known to have once belonged to Arias, shows a Guardian Angel conducting a child past the grasping claws of Satan and a dragon; the angel is shown wearing a sash emblazoned with the eight-pointed cross of the Order of St John (Fig. 114).²² The painting was bequeathed to the Cathedral of Seville at the Archbishop's death, and may be the one listed in Arias's *spoglio* of 1703. A painting of St Michael the Archangel by Mattia Preti, based on the iconography established by Guido Reni, was prominently displayed inside in the Conventual Church in the Chapel of Provence (Fig. 115). Copies of the Reni/Preti painting were to be found in Hospitaller collections such as those belonging to Fra Gio Batta Brancaccio (d.1684) in Malta,²³ and the French knight Fra Joseph de Panisse Boiselet (d.1678),²⁴ while a statue in Trapani stone of the same subject was listed in the *spoglio* belonging to Fra Giacomo Filippo del Balzo (d.1694).²⁵ A painting of the archangel

¹⁶ Current research indicates that the non-observance of the prohibition of the invocation of Biblical angels' names extended to other Hispanic areas of South America; verbal communication by Dr Fernando Cervantes.

¹⁷ Between 1635-1640, one set of paintings of angels, singled out by name, arrived in Peru from Madrid and Seville, while the Madrid convent of Las Descalzas Reales had a mural painting of Philip IV and his family kneeling in front of a crucifixion scene surrounded by the seven princes of heaven – St Michael, St Raphael, St Gabriel, St Uriel, St Sealthiel, St Jerudiel and St Barachiel – as well as seven paintings of these saints. The latter series, by Bartolomé Roman (1596-1659) was also reproduced by the artist for the Jesuit church of San Pedro in Lima. In 1647, Francisco de Zurbarán executed another series of seven angels for the Monastery of La Concepción in Lima. Ramon Mujica Pinilla, 'Angels and Demons in the Conquest of Peru' in Fernando Cervantes and Andrew Redden, eds, *Angels, Demons and the New World*, Cambridge, 2012, advance copy. I thank Dr Cervantes for kindly drawing my attention to this essay.

¹⁸ AOM 931 (28) No. 6, f.32: Fra Cesare Lopez (d.1666), 'Un quadro con li sette Arcangeli'.

¹⁹ AOM 931 (28) No. 6, f.80: 'Piu dono all'Ill.mo Sr Pr della Roccella Caraffa il quadro delli sette angeli'.

²⁰ The large painting was attributed and dated to the 1640s by Nicola Spinosa 'Caravaggio and Early Naturalism in Naples: the context for Neapolitan paintings in Malta', in *Caravaggio and Paintings of Realism in Malta*, ed. by C. de Giorgio and K. Sciberras, Malta, 2007, 129-30.

²¹ AOM 931 (4) No. 9, ff.105, 106: 'Un quadro grande del Angel de la guarda', and 'Un quadro pequeno del Angel de la guardia'; Don Manuel Arias lived in Malta from 1654 until his return to Seville in 1682. His *dispropiamento* took place in 1703, one year after he became Archbishop of Seville.

²² Spike, Preti: *Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings*, 276-7. Fra Arias also acquired other paintings by Mattia Preti: Job and his Friends, and John the Baptist Beheaded, both found inside the Archbishop's Palace, Seville. Spike, Preti: *Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings*, 399-400.

²³ AOM 931 (31) No. 16, f.122: 'San Michele Arcangelo, copia del Guidoreni'.

²⁴ AOM 931 (13) No. 24, f.90: 'L'Ange Custode'.

²⁵ AOM 931 (32) No. 7, f.59v: 'Statuetta bianca di pietra di trapani S. Michele Arcangelo'

Raphael appears in the *spoglio* of Fra Giuseppe Maria Cicinelli (d.1780), bequeathed through his *quinto* to an un-named Abbess.²⁶

The exploration given above of the cultural influence that may have been exerted by the Jesuit Order in Malta, presents only one possible facet of the presence of religious images in Hospitaller art collections. Marian art as well as images relating to the cult of saints had been executed by artists several centuries earlier,²⁷ whereas others, such as scenes of martyrdom, were given impetus by the Counter-Reformation. The alternative facets of Hospitaller art collecting presented by such considerations would be aligned with those of other Christian art collectors throughout Europe and would not necessarily inform the study in what was specific to Hospitaller values.

7.2.1 Marian imagery

As mentioned earlier, devotional images of Mary and the Child Jesus are the single most frequently mentioned subject of paintings within the inventories of Hospitaller knights, including the magistral inventories. Foremost amongst saints, the figure of Mary holds a unique significance with respect to the incarnation of the Son of God as recounted in the Bible and in the Gospel. Mary was also regarded as the principal intermediary between human beings and God, as prefigured in the Gospel's account of the Wedding of Cana.²⁸ The most common descriptions of Marian images in Hospitaller inventories are *Beata Vergine*, *La Madonna*, *Nostra Signora*, *L'Immacolata*, *La Madonna di Sette Dolori* and *Vergine Addolorata*. Several inventories include *sacra conversazione* type compositions with the *Madonna and Child* together with saints,²⁹ including two paintings which once formed part of the magistral collection: one was a large format *Blessed Virgin, St Charles Borromeo and angels*, while the other shows the *Blessed Virgin with the Child Jesus caressing the face of a patron* (Fig. 116),³⁰

²⁶ AOM 931 (38) No. 31, f.130: '*Alla Sig. Madre Abbad. il quadro grande dell'Arcangelo Raffaele di buona mano che sta nella Galleria*'. Cicinelli bequeathed a number of paintings to his nieces who were nuns.

²⁷ On devotional images in the medieval period, refer to Beth Williamson, 'Altarpieces, Liturgy and Devotion', *Speculum*, 79: 2 (April 2004) 341-406.

²⁸ The Gospel of St John 2:1-11. Christ's first miracle was performed in public at the marriage feast at the village of Cana, near Galilee. When the wine ran out, Mary prompted Jesus's intervention and told the servants to do what he told them. The servants filled some vessels with water that Jesus miraculously turned into wine. Mary's role as intermediary between her Son on behalf of the spouses and guests is comparable to her role as intermediary between God and humankind.

²⁹ AOM 931 (32) No. 23, f.189: Fra Fabio Gori (d.1698), '*Il quadro di S.Caterina di Siena, S. Bernardino e Nra Sig.ra*'; this painting may be the same as the '*quadretto rapp.te la Madonna col Bambino Gesù, S. Bernardino, e Sta Caterina da Siena*' that was bequeathed by Fra Ottavio Tancredi to Fra Gasparo Gori, possibly a kinsman of Fra Fabio Gori; AOM 931 (35) No. 16, f.110; AOM 931 (4) No.21, f.298v: Fra Alonso de Guzman (d.1708), '*N.ra S.a, Sn Antonio y el nino, lamina*'; AOM 927, f.312v: Fra Cesare Nicoló Losa (d.Torino 1767), '*la SS.ma Vergine col Bambino, et St Giuseppe et St Giovenale*'.

³⁰ Schiavone, *I Tesori del Palazzo Magistrale*, Cat. no. 60: '*Altro ad olio (nel second rango), alto palmi 3, largo palmi 5, La Beata Vergine col Figlio che accarezza un personaggio, copia di Wandick (sic.)*', and Cat. No. 112: '*Altro ad olio, alto palmi 7, largo 5, San Carlo Borromeo, la Beata Vergine e varj Angeli di autore ignoto.*'

and is a half-length copy of the upper register of the painting by Anthony van Dyck, Virgin with Donors (Fig. 117).³¹

A recent study of early sixteenth-century inventories of Venetian households has shown that paintings of the Virgin Mary were to be found in the majority of dwelling places, both in modest dwellings and in splendid palazzi.³² This leads to the consideration that the relative frequency of Marian images in Hospitaller inventories may be due to more than Counter-Reformation cult practices and may need to be traced to earlier norms regarding Marian imagery. The image of the Holy Mother and her Child may have held resonance at a basic and intimately human level, especially amongst Hospitaller knights, whose vow of chastity precluded them from the generation of offspring and the enjoyment of a private family life. The image of the Holy Family linking the figure of Joseph with that of the Madonna and Child may have provided a further intimate quality into Marian imagery, with the figure of Joseph mediating the notion of familial relationships for the Hospitaller viewer.³³ Devotional imagery of the Holy Family in Hospitaller art collections may also suggest yet another possible indication of Jesuit influence, this being a pictorial theme which helped missionaries in their attempts to convert outsiders to Christianity. Similarly, devotional images of the Holy Family which included the figure of the Young St John the Baptist,³⁴ also encouraged the notion of a spiritual brotherhood that may have held resonance amongst younger Hospitaller knights.³⁵

Sacred imagery of the Madonna and Child would hold different meanings according to the context within which such images would be found. Those inventories that list paintings according to the room in which they were displayed, frequently indicate the display of Marian

³¹ 'Virgin with Donors,' by Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641), 250 x 191 cm, Louvre Museum, Inv. No. 1231. The Louvre picture was painted during the artist's second Antwerp period, in around 1630. It was greatly enlarged in the eighteenth century. It probably decorated a funerary monument and thus served a commemorative purpose. The praying couple probably represent the occupants of the tomb. Provenance: Estate of canon Guillelmus van Hamme in Antwerp, 1668; Collection of Louis XIV (acquired in Flanders in 1685).

³² Nicholas Penny, 'Toothpicks and green hangings', *Renaissance Studies*, 19: 5, 2005, 586-7.

³³ The following are a few examples: AOM 931 (28) No. 9, f.66: Fra Giovanni Mastrilli (d.1669), '*Una Madonna piccolo ... piangia con S.Gios. e lo Signorezzo*'; AOM 931 (31) No. 10, f.59v: Fra Giovanni Alferi (d.1687), '*Un'altro quadro del [Giovanni Battista] Bennaschi [Torino, 1636-1688] cioe' S. Giuseppe, Beata Vergine, e altri*'; AOM 931 (33) No. 14, f.102: Fra Raymundi de Moncada 'Sn Giuseppe col Christo in Mano'; AOM 931 (2) No. 34, f.145: Fra Gabriel de Castillo (d.1703), '*otra de San Joseph com o menino Jezus*'; AOM 931 (4) No. 21, f.298v: Fra Bali Alonso de Guzman (d.1708), '*Jhs. Maria y Joseph*'; AOM 927 'G', f.7: Fra Bali Francesco Artimone del Maro Doria (d.1727), '*la Madonna con il Bambino in Braccia e S. Giuseppe*'; AOM 931 (36) No. 8, f.114v: Fra Alviero Zacco (d.1776), '*La Sacra Famiglia*'; AOM 928, f.43: Fra Silvio Vicentini (d.1787), '*La Santa Famiglia a capo da letto*'. Only one 'Holy Family' was listed in the magistral inventory of 1823, a small oil-on-copper painting; Schiavone, *I Tesori del Palazzo Magistrale*, Cat. No. 63: '*Quadro ad olio, sopra piancia di rame, alto palmi 1 1/2 largo palmo 1, la Sacra Famiglia, con varj angeli, della scuola romana*'.

³⁴ The following are a few examples: AOM 931 (33) No. 14, f.102: Fra Raymundi de Moncada (d.1702), '*La Madonna, Sn Gius.e, S. Giovanni ed un Christo*'; AOM 931 (34) No. 23, f.168v: Fra Mario Bichi (d.1707), '*Un quadro mezzano con la Madonna, S. Giuseppe, il S.o Bambino, S.o Giovanni B.ta*'; AOM 931 (36) No. 17, f.175v: '*La Figura di Nra Sig.a Bambino in Braccia, S. Gius. e S. Gio Batta*'

³⁵ The information on Jesuitical use of imagery of the Holy Family, and the Holy Family with St John, was kindly provided by Prof. Paul Shore, scholar on the Society of Jesus (Charles University, Prague), February 2011.

imagery in private chambers or bedrooms, occasionally above a *prie-dieu*,³⁶ denoting their devotional, sacred purpose in prayer and meditation.³⁷ The mention of Marian imagery within more public halls and galleries, suggest that such paintings were appreciated for their aesthetic merits, the history of their execution by a famed artist, or the pedigree of their provenance.

The image of the Virgin Mary was linked to particular heroic episodes in the history of the Order. In Caoursin's account of the outcome of the Siege of Rhodes of 1480, as the city walls were being pounded by Turkish forces, the miraculous apparition of the Virgin Mary and St John the Baptist over those same walls, turned the imminent loss of the city into the victory of the Order.³⁸ As with the image of St John the Baptist, the image of the Virgin Mary thus held historical nuance linking Hospitaller heroism and victory with her miraculous appearance, and therefore presented a pictorial subject that Hospitaller knights could find solace in. The historical significance adds the possibility of a reading of the presence of Marian imagery in its peculiar reference to Hospitaller tradition.

Another factor concerning the inclusion of Marian imagery in Hospitaller inventories, is the Order's veneration of its own antique icons of the Virgin Mary and child, namely the miraculous image of Our Lady of Philermos (from the Order's time in Jerusalem), and the Eleimonitria, both works which were brought to Malta from Rhodes together with other treasures of the Order. The Philermos icon was kept in a chapel within the Conventual church that was dedicated to the hallowed image, and was at the centre of a widely diffused cult amongst Hospitaller knights.³⁹ This coincided with measures by the Catholic Church, as part of the Counter Reformation, to reclaim the sacrality of religious images by reinstalling miraculous icons on their former altars. One example in 1565 is the removal of Raphael's Madonna di Foligno (1511-12) from the high altar of the Aracoeli in Rome, and its replacement with an ancient icon.⁴⁰ The inclusion of icons, possibly copies of the Philermos icon or the Eleimonitria, in Hospitaller art inventories is suggested, through the phrase '*alla greca*' which would imply a byzantine style in the execution of the painting, with the occasional mention of the painting's antiquity or its wood support. Instances of such descriptions would be '*Una*

³⁶ AOM 931 (12), No. 15, f.63: Fra Jean-Jacques de Verdelin (d. 1673), '*Il mio ginocchiatore di noce col quadro della Madonna Ss.ma*'; AOM 931 (36) No. 8, f.114v: Fra Ferdinando Rosselmini (d.1778), '*il parto della Vergine, sopra il ginocchiatore ... la morte di nro Signore, sopra ginocchiatore*'.

³⁷ Fra Gio Batta Porcinari (d.1783) stated that the one piece of art in his inventory was acquired for devotional reasons: AOM 928, f.52: *Una effigie di bronzo della Madre de' Sette Dolori da egli [nephew Marchese Porcinari] improntatami per sodisfare alla mia devozione*'.

³⁸ Guillaume Caoursin, *Rhodiurum Historia*, Ulm, 1496, translated by John Kaye, *The Siege of Rhodes*, London, 1483, quoted in Michael Herzfeld, 'New Light on the 1480 Siege of Rhodes', *The British Museum Quarterly*, 36: ¾, Autumn 1972, 69-73.

³⁹ Devotional art also involved ceremony as a form of interaction with a religious painting or sculpture. One ceremony around the Icon of Our Lady of Philermos included a performance in the form of a dialogue in praise of the Blessed Virgin, recited by young knights dressed as angels; AOM Libr. Ms 235, *Trattato della Maggio chiesa Conventuale di S. Gio / opera del Comend.re fra Gio Dom.co Manso*, 1698, f.27-8, '*una rappresentazione in forma di dialogo recitato in lode della Beata Vergine da Giovanetti Cav.ri vestiti da angeli*'.

⁴⁰ Marcia B. Hall, *The Sacred Image in the Age of Art*, New Haven, 2011, 2.

Madonna antica sopra tavola’,⁴¹ ‘*Un quadro della Vergine antigua sopra tavola alla Greca*’⁴² or ‘*Una Madonna piccola greca*’.⁴³ The collection of Grand Master Vasconcellos included a painting similar to that of Santa Maria Maggiore, possibly a copy of the miraculous icon.⁴⁴

7.2.2 Imagery of St John

Amongst the pantheon of saints that are mentioned as subjects of paintings in various Hospitaller inventories, the most frequently mentioned is St John the Baptist. This may be expected, as he was after all the patron saint of the Hospitaller Order. From their time in Rhodes, the image of St John the Baptist was particularly significant to the Hospitaller knights’ fortunes.⁴⁵ In 1480, the miraculous vision of the Baptist was inextricably tied with the victorious outcome of the Siege of their city, since, according to popular accounts, the Knights’ victory over the Turks was owed to the miraculous appearance of St John the Baptist, armed with a shield and spear; his apparition, together with that of the Virgin by his side, caused the enemy to retreat in fear. That this miracle was described in an account of the history of the Order 1602,⁴⁶ implies that the narrative of a miraculous apparition held validity and resonance in Hospitaller imagination, possibly as an implied form of sacred privilege and identity.

The High Altarpiece of the Conventual church portrayed the Baptism of Christ, first in a painting on the theme by Matteo Perez d’Aleccio (Fig. 42) and later, in marble, by Giuseppe Mazzuoli (Fig. 70). The magistral art collection included a painting of The Baptism, after Poussin.⁴⁷ However images of St John demand further consideration in order to understand the specific significance that the figure of the Baptist would have held for Hospitaller knights. Historically, the Order had its eleventh-century beginnings in the hospital church of St John near the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. After the suppression of the Templars in 1312, the Hospitallers were the only Christian defenders of holy territory and other sacred holdings such as relics, including the one that came to be the Order’s most prized, the right arm and hand of St John the Baptist. Thus the very person of the Saint became infused with the identity of the Hospitaller knight, as defender of Christianity, mediated through the very remains of the body of John the Baptist.⁴⁸

⁴¹ AOM 931 (28) No. 22, f.136: Fra Prior Giovanni Carpena Burló (d.1671).

⁴² AOM 931 (36) No. 4, f.44v; Fra Gian Carlo Pasqualino (d.1718).

⁴³ AOM 931 (31) No. 9, f.46; Fra Comm. Gulio Sortino (d.1686).

⁴⁴ AOM 924, f.30v: ‘*E similmente lasciamo per il Stato [del magistero] cinque quadri con le loro cornice e parte dorato cioè uno di Nra Sig.ra simile a la S.M. Maggiore di Roma, ...*’.

⁴⁵ Timothy B. Smith ‘Up in Arms: the Knights of Rhodes, the Cult of Relics, and the Chapel of St John the Baptist in Siena Cathedral’, in *Images, Relics and Devotional Practices in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* ed. by Sally Cornelison and Scott B. Montgomery, Arizona, 2006, 213-238; Herzfeld, ‘New Light on the 1480 Siege of Rhodes’, 71.

⁴⁶ Bosio, *Dell’Istoria*.

⁴⁷ Schiavone, *I Tesori del Palazzo Magistrale*, Cat. No. 172: ‘*altro ad olio, alto palmi 5, largo palmi 7, il Battesimo di Nostro Signore, copia mediocre dal Pussino*’.

⁴⁸ Through a series of momentous events, this important relic was lost, and later, re-acquired, by the Order in 1484, remaining in their care throughout their rule of Malta and was subsequently taken away with them as one of the

In the monumental fresco depiction of another victory, that of the Siege of Malta of 1565, the artist painted the apparition of St John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary over the defeated Turks as they departed from the shores of Malta. It may be argued that the apparition of St John, reiterated in subsequent imaging in devotional paintings, held a particular significance for Hospitaller knights who constantly expected a fresh Turkish onslaught, against which, until well into the second half of the eighteenth century, the Order prepared itself by building ever more formidable fortification walls to defend its city and its harbour towns.⁴⁹

One image of St John the Baptist frequently found in Hospitaller art collections is that of the saint as a boy or child, a fourth figure with the Holy Family, already discussed above. One composition devised by Mattia Preti, of a 'Hospitaller' St John in his youth, depicted the saint with his attributes of a staff and a lamb wearing the Hospitaller surcoat (Fig. 118). The painting once formed part of the magistral collection, having been included in the 1823 inventory of the Palace,⁵⁰ whereas two copies are also known.⁵¹ Such an image may have been commissioned for the young pages of the Grand Master, or for novices and young knights to provide a close identification with the patron saint of the Order.

7.2.3 *Martyrdom scenes*

Another image specific to the iconography of the Baptist holding special significance for Hospitaller knights was the Beheading [Decollation] of St John. The Order's ongoing war in defence of the Faith against Ottoman forces regularly brought its knights face-to-face with the enemy, in naval expeditions and skirmishes, risking their imprisonment and enslavement. The added possibility of dying for the Faith at the Infidel's sword raised a Hospitaller knight's death to the level of martyrdom. In the Oratory of the Conventual Church, Caravaggio's Beheading of St John was the one painting which novices of the Order regularly saw during their preparation in religious studies (Fig. 119). Above the altarpiece was a lunette depicting the Martyrdom of the knights of Malta at the Siege of St Elmo, 1565 (Fig. 120).⁵² The lunette

few possessions that they were allowed by Napoleon in 1798. Luttrell, 'the Rhodian Background of the Order of St John on Malta', 12-13.

⁴⁹ The Order's programme of fortification building continued right up to 1792, with the building of Fort Tigne at the tip of Marsamxett Harbour. The fort was named after Bali René Jacques de Tigne who donated 1000 scudi towards its construction. Stephen C. Spiteri, *Fortresses of the Knights*, Malta, 2001, 319.

⁵⁰ Schiavone, *I Tesori del Palazzo Magistrale*, Cat. No. 66: 'Altro quadro ad olio, in tela, alto palmi 3½, largo palmi 3, *San Giovanni con la croce, allusive all'Ordine Gerosolimitana, del Mattias*'. The painting is now displayed at the National Museum of Fine Arts: 'Young St John the Baptist in the habit of the Order', oil on canvas, 99 x 77cm, Inv. 279 FAS/P/221.

⁵¹ One copy is displayed inside the parish church of Lija, Malta whereas another was known in a Munich collection and published in *The Burlington Magazine* in May 1928; Spike, *Preti: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings*, 346.

⁵² The lunette was painted in the early seventeenth century by the Maltese artist, Bartolommeo Garagona (1584-1641) and was displayed inside the Oratory, above Caravaggio's Beheading of the Baptist, until 1682 with the redecoration of the Oratory by Mattia Preti. The painting was subsequently removed to the Church of St Paul's Grotto that formed part of the Order's College of Conventual Chaplains in Rabat and shortly after to the refectory of the Conventual Franciscans in Rabat. John Azzopardi, 'The Lunette arrived at the conventual Franciscan friary

linked the heroic death of the Hospitaller knights in a key episode of the Order's subsequent victory, with the iconography of the martyrdom of St John the Baptist, in an ensemble that has been described by David M. Stone as a 'martyrology cycle' starting with the image of the '*santo precursore*' as the 'first fallen knight' who prepared the way for Christ and the eucharist, and, [in its proximity to the lunette] for the order and its martyrs as well'.⁵³ The theme of the Beheading is also the subject of paintings found in Hospitaller art collections (Fig. 121).⁵⁴ The magistral collection included one painting of the Imprisonment of St John as well as two paintings on the theme of the Decollation, all three from the studio of Mattia Preti.⁵⁵ Related to this theme are paintings showing the Head of the Baptist, representing the 'gift' asked of Herod by Salome.⁵⁶ One painting on this theme, *una mezza figura di Herodiade con la testa di San giovanni nel bacino*, was painted by Caravaggio and presented to Wignacourt.⁵⁷ Similar paintings in the *spogli* indicate only the Head of the Baptist.⁵⁸ A marble sculpture of the Head of the Baptist, formerly attributed to Pierre Puget (1620-1694) and more recently to an as yet unknown Florentine mannerist sculptor, was presented to the Conventual church as the gift of *passaggio* from Jean Melchior Alpheran Prior of Aix, who, in 1736, arrived in Malta to join the Order of St John.⁵⁹

Other subjects of martyrdom may have held a similar significance for Hospitaller knights,⁶⁰ as would portraits of martyr saints, such the one of St Stephen, described as proto-martyr in the *spoglio* of Fra Silvestro Grimaldi (d.1710),⁶¹ or paintings of St Sebastian, such as that by the hand of the Messinese artist Antonio Alberti (1600-1649) known as 'Barbalonga', in the

from St Paul's Grotto', in *The 1565 Siege of the Knights of Malta at Fort St Elmo*, ed. by Jovan Mizzi, Florence, 2008, 28-29.

⁵³ David M. Stone, 'The Context of Caravaggio's Beheading of St John in Malta', *The Burlington Magazine*, 139: 1128, March 1997. 169.

⁵⁴ AOM 931 (4) No. 9, f.105v: Fra Don Manuel Arias, '*Degollar.n de San Juan Bau.ta*'. This painting is now found inside the Seville Palace of the Archbishop, where Manuel Arias lived on becoming Archbishop from 1702 and 1717. AOM 931 (31) No. 10, f.51v: Fra Silvio Sortino (d.1686), '*Decollazione di San Gio Battista del Farelli*', possibly referring to a work by the Neapolitan artist, Giacomo Farelli (1624-1706); AOM 927, f.57: Fra Alessandro Ballati (d.1735), '*La Decollazione di San Gio Batta*'; AOM 931 (29) No. 21, f.106v: Fra Angelo Marone (d.1674), '*La Decoll. di San Giovanni*'.

⁵⁵ Schiavone, *I Tesori del Palazzo Magistrale*, Cat no. 146: '*altro quadro ad olio, alto palmi 4, largo palmi 6, San Giovanni nelle carceri, copia mediocre dal Calabrese*'. Cat. No. 51: '*Altro ad olio, alto palmi 5½, largo palmi 7, la Decollazione di S. Giovanni Battista, della medesima scuola [del Mattias]*', and Cat. No. 160: '*Altro quadro ad olio, alto palmi 7, largo palmi 10, la Decollazione di San Giovanni, figura intiera della scuola del Mattias*'.

⁵⁶ The Gospel of St Mark, 6:21-28.

⁵⁷ Gio Pietro Bellori, *Le vite dei pittori ...*, Rome, 1672, 211, quoted in Giovanni Bonello, 'The Hidden History of the Palace Pillage' in *The Sunday Times [of Malta]* July 25th, August 1st and August 8th, 2010. Refer to Chapter I.

⁵⁸ AOM 931 (5) No. 3, f.33: Fra Mosquera (d.1718), '*un quadro dela Caveza del Baupista*'; AOM 931 (28) No. 22, f.133v: Prior Fra Carpena Burló (d. 1671), '*Testa di S. Giov.*'; AOM 931 (32) No. 27, f.239: Prior Fra Stefano Maria Lomellini (d.1699), '*Una Testa di S. Giovanni decollato*'; AOM 931 (37) No. 16, f.65: Fra Pio Francesco Gori (d. 1755), '*Erodiade in mano il capo del nostro Protettore S. Gio Battista*'.

⁵⁹ Dominic Cutajar, *History and Works of Art of St John's Church Valletta – Malta*, Malta, 1999, 97.

⁶⁰ The following are some examples from the *dispropriamenti*: AOM 931 (34) No. 25, f.215v: Fra Andrea di Giovanni (d.1715), '*Martirio di S. Andrea con simile cornice d'oro mano di F. Mattia*'. This large painting was a companion piece to a Crucifixion scene, also by Mattia Preti. AOM 927, f.258: Ball Don Andrea di Minutolo (d.1747), '*Il Martirio di San Andrea mano del malinconico*'. AOM 931 (13) No. 24, f.90: Fra Joseph de Panisse Boisselet (d.1678), '*Le Martire de St Laurans en deux tableaux et leurs cornice dorées aux extremités*'... '*Le martyre de St Estienne, le martire Ste Barbe, le martire St Caterine*'. AOM 931 (39) No. 10, f.30: Fra Fabrizio Visconti (d.1739), '*Il Martirio di Sta Cecilia ... su rame*'. AOM 931 (38) No. 30, f.120: Fra Ottavio Garcin (d.1781), '*Il martirio di Sta Lucia*'.

⁶¹ AOM 931 (34) No. 4, f.30: '*S. Stefano Protomartire*'.

collection of Fra Andrea di Giovanni.⁶² The magistral art collection also included two paintings of martyrdom scenes, both of St Catherine and both by Mattia Preti, and a third of an un-named saint,⁶³ as well as a St Peter in Prison (Fig. 122),⁶⁴ possibly the one attributed to the studio of Johan Ulrich Loth on display in Verdala Palace today. While the Counter-Reformation may have played a significant part in the increasing numbers of martyrdom themes on display inside churches, the relative frequency of martyrdom and imprisonment themes thus suggests further meaning specific to Hospitaller art collectors.

7.2.4 Other saints

On another level, the ascetic life of St John the Baptist preaching in the desert on the very frontiers of the Faith which he anticipated in his words, may have held an added significance for Hospitaller knights who, on the periphery of Christian Europe far away from their homeland, lived a devout and pious life '*in convento*'.⁶⁵ This would be reflected by the relative modesty of belongings listed in the greater number of *spogli* and which yet would include a *quadretto*, or '*quadro piccolo di La Beatissima Vergine e Bambino*', as well as a '*San Giovanni Battista*'. A Hospitaller knight's identification with saints had its roots in the late middle ages, particularly with saints who came from the nobility and ruling class, mainly from Christian countries, thus reinforcing a knight's self-identity that was embedded in his noble birth.⁶⁶ Paintings of St John Preaching in the Desert were included in a number of *spogli*.⁶⁷ This aspect of the life of the Baptist was shared by other hermit saints who appear as the primary subjects of other paintings in Hospitaller art collections. These are St Jerome,⁶⁸ St Paul the Hermit, St Mary Magdalen/St Mary of Egypt,⁶⁹ St Anthony the Abbot, St Hilarion the Hermit,⁷⁰ and St Conrad the Hermit,⁷¹ amongst others.⁷² The magistral art collection included two paintings of St Paul the Hermit,

⁶² AOM 931 (34) No. 25, f.214: '*San Sebastiano mano di detto Barbalonga*'. Di Giovanni's collection included nine other paintings attributed to the artist.

⁶³ Schiavone, *I Tesori del Palazzo Magistrale*, Cat. No.28: '*Altro ad olio, alto palmi 8, largo palmi 8, il Martirio di Santa Caterina, originale del Cav. Mattias*', and Cat. no. 142: '*altro ad olio, alto palmi 7 in circa, largo palmi 7, quadrate, copia mediocre della gia' detta Sta Caterina, del Calabrese*'; Cat. No. 111: '*altro quadro in olio, alto palmi 5½, largo palmi 3, Un santo martire, mezza figura, copia dal Caravaggio*'.

⁶⁴ Schiavone, *I Tesori*, Cat. No. 29: '*Altro ad olio, alto palmo 3½, largo palmi 3, San Pietro in carcere, copia dal Caravaggio*'.

⁶⁵ The term '*in convento*' continued to be used by the Order to denote a Hospitaller knight's presence in Malta, having lost its literal meaning with the Order's decision in 1565 to abandon the idea of the *Collachio* (denoting the area allocated to the residence of Hospitaller knights in Rhodes) with the building of Valletta.

⁶⁶ Lily Richards, 'San Ranieri of Pisa', in *Art, Politics and Civic Religion in Central Italy 1261-1352*, ed. by Joanna Cannon and Beth Williamson, Ashgate, 2000, 180.

⁶⁷ AOM 931 (28) No. 9, f.65v: Fra Giovanni Mastrilli (d.1669), '*Un S. Gio Batta in deserto*'; AOM 931 (34) No. 22, f.154: Fra Giuseppe Bertone de Balbis (d. 1714), '*San Giovanni che predica nel deserto*'; AOM 928, f.103: Fra Michel Sagramoso (d. 1788), '*San Giovanni predicante*'.

⁶⁸ AOM 931 (12) No. 5, f.17v: Fra Rene Vexel du Tertre, '*St Jerosme*'; AOM 931 (4) No. 9, f.105: Fr Don Manuel Arias, '*S. Geronimo*'.

⁶⁹ AOM 931 (38) No. 10 f.36v: Fra Guidotto Maria di Casamassimi, '*Sta Maria Egiziaca*'.

⁷⁰ AOM931 (32) No. 3, f.25, Fra Don Andrea Marciano had a series of paintings of hermit saints, '*S. Ant.o Abbate/ S. Pietro/ S. Geronimo/ S. Paolo Eremita/ S. Ilarione*'.

⁷¹ AOM931 (31) No 9, f.46: Fra Gulio Sortino (d.1686), '*San Corrado Eremita*'.

⁷² AOM 931 (34) No. 10, f.69: Fra Davide Cocco Palmeri, '*Il Transito di S. Onofrio/S. Paolo p.mo Eremita/La Maddalena penitente*'; AOM931 (28) No.6 f.32, Fra Cesare Lopez, '*la Maddalena/ S. Onofrio/ S. Geronimo, mezza figura/ La Madalena, mezza figura*'.

both from the studio of Mattia Preti, as well as a St Jerome after Jusepe Ribera, and a St Mary Magdalen, attributed to the circle of Marten van Heemskerck (Fig. 123).⁷³

The exemplary lives of saints contained much that would have been extolled in the course of religious instruction, or in narratives on their piety and sacrifice. Yet one specific factor inherent in the lives of hermit saints, may have led their representative images to hold a suggestive capacity, evoking the imagined geographies of physical distance and spiritual proximity, in a manner which would have held resonance amongst Hospitaller knights, as discussed in Chapter I. Several other saints appear in the inventories attesting to the cultural influence exerted by other Orders in Malta, such as the Dominican and Franciscan Orders.⁷⁴ The inclusion of images of these saints in Hospitaller art collections would be of some relevance to biographical studies on individual Hospitaller knights, whose *spoglio* could offer tangential insights into their personal cultural formation as well as presenting another means for mapping the topography of private Hospitaller lives.⁷⁵

The annotated description of devotional themes given above - namely Marian art, Joannite imagery and that of other saints, as well as martyrdom scenes - also presents an interpretative exploration of the significance which such images may have held within the context of the Order of St John and its knights. This brief analysis locates such an interpretation at a semi-public level, linking factors specific to the community of knights of St John with the private spiritual concerns suggested by devotional art in individual art collections. The literature on sacred art in Catholic Reformation Europe has focussed predominantly on those works of art commissioned for public spaces such as churches and side-chapels, citing considerations which were amply reflected in the ecclesiastical patronage of the Order in Malta and in its commanderies and priories. The impact of contemporary treatises intended to reform religious

⁷³ Schiavone, *I Tesori del Palazzo Magistrale*, Cat. no. 44: 'Altro ad olio, alto palmi 5½, largo palmi 4½, San Paolo, scuola del Mattias', Cat. no. 48: 'Altro ad olio (sopra la porta), alto palmi 4½, largo 3½, San Paolo primo eremite, originale del Cav. Mattias', Cat. no. 54: 'Altro ad olio, alto palmi 9, largo palmi 6½, San Paolo primo eremite, figura intiera, della scuola del Mattias', Cat. no. 113: 'Altro ad olio, alto palmi 4, largo 3½, in cattivo stato, sembra essere copia di San Girolamo dello Spagnoletto', Cat. no. 166: 'Altro quadro ad olio, alto palmi 6, largo palmi 4½, San Carlo, copia di quello esistente nella camera decimasesta [Un santo martire or San Carlo Borromeo, la Beata Vergine e varj angeli]', Cat. no. 181: 'altro ad olio, alto palmi 2, largo palmi 1¼, San Francesco in estasi'.

⁷⁴ Images of Franciscan and Dominican saints appear several times in the *spogli*. The magistral art collection included paintings of St Thomas, San Carlo, St Francis de Paule and St Sebastian, as well as paintings of biblical predecessors, such as Lot and his daughters, Noah and his sons, Jacob's dream, David and Goliath, amongst others. Schiavone, *I Tesori del Palazzo Magistrale*, Cat. no. 30: 'Altro ad olio, sotto il medesimo, alto palmi 3½, largo palmi 3, San Francesco di Paola, di Stefano Gherardi', Cat. no. 52: 'Altro ad olio (sopra la porta) alto palmi 4, largo palmi 5, San Sebastiano, mezza figura scuola de' Caracci', Cat. no. 58: 'Altro ad olio in tela, della medesima grandezza [alto palmi 2½, largo palmi 2] San Francesco di Paola, originale dello Spagnoletto', Cat. No. 134: 'Altro ad olio, alto palmi 4, largo palmi 7, San Tommaso che tocca la piaga del Signore, copia dal Calabrese', Cat. no. 135: 'Altro ad olio, della medesima grandezza dell'antecedente, altro San Tommaso, copia come il suddetto', Cat. no. 166: 'Altro quadro ad olio, alto palmi 6, largo palmi 4½, San Carlo, copia di quello esistente nella camera decimasesta [Cat. no. 112]', Cat. no. 181: 'Altro ad olio, alto palmi 2, largo palmi 1¼, San Francesco in estasi'.

⁷⁵ One model for adapting art collections in biographical studies has been discussed in Duclos, 'The cartographies of collecting'.

imagery, such as Johannes Molanus's *De Picturis et Imaginibus Sacris* (1570) and Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti's *Discorso intorno alle immagini sacre e profane* (1582), had led to an overriding preoccupation with religious decorum,⁷⁶ challenging artists such as Titian, Tintoretto, Barocci, El Greco and Caravaggio to lead the way in bridging the requirements of art and innovation with the demands of the Church.⁷⁷ The reciprocal impact on private collectors and art patrons has been less visible. According to Francis Haskell 'the vast majority of private collectors [in Rome] were content to follow the general fashion set by the [papal] court'.⁷⁸ The above-mentioned observations are a contribution to a deeper awareness of the adaptation of Counter-Reformation art within the context of an imagined community, bound by its vow to uphold the Catholic faith.

7.3 Art collections - 2: Symbolic markers of identity and values

Judging by the types of works of art listed in personal Hospitaller inventories, it would appear that at an individual level, Hospitaller art collectors followed the Italian model of art collecting, which favoured paintings and sculpture over other forms of contemporary art and that valued artistic quality in terms of inventiveness and erudition over splendour or ornateness.⁷⁹ Although the latter qualities would be impossible to judge from the mere listings, they are consistent with the values imparted in the advice given by Fra Sabba da Castiglione,⁸⁰ in his admiration for the inventiveness of artists and in his scorn for collectors who amassed large collections without appreciating the artistic significance of the individual pieces. Hospitaller art collectors continued to follow the Italian model of collecting at the turn of the eighteenth century, basing their choice of secular works on the models which had been established by grand collectors in Rome and Tuscany, and which in their turn, had informed the connoisseurial treatise written by Giulio Mancini titled *Considerazioni sulla Pittura* (c.1619-21),⁸¹ discussed in Chapter II. Mancini's recommendations were adapted to both the princely collector as well as to the collector of more modest means, both of which 'types' are present amongst Hospitaller knights.

Such a model for art collecting may have been especially suited to Hospitaller knights for various reasons. Historically art patronage was a nobleman's activity while realistically the accumulation of works of art was only possible for those noblemen of means. With the knights being recruited from noble families, the Order was made up of men who were led to expect a

⁷⁶ Beverly Louise Brown, 'Between the Sacred and Profane', in *The Genius of Rome, 1592-1623*, Royal Academy of Arts, 2001, pp.276, 286.

⁷⁷ Hall, *The Sacred Image in the Age of Art*, 1 – 15.

⁷⁸ Haskell, *Patrons and Painters*, 94.

⁷⁹ De Benedictis, *Per la storia del Collezionismo Italiano*.

⁸⁰ Refer to Chapter II, 'Literary sources on Hospitaller art collecting'.

⁸¹ Christina de Benedictis, 'Regole per comprare collocare e conservare le pitture di Giulio Mancini' in C. de Benedictis & Roberta Roani, *Riflessioni sulle 'Regole per comprare collocare e conservare le pitture' di Giulio Mancini*, Florence, 2005, 7-24.

high quality of living, comparable to the lifestyle in which they had been raised, with the distinction that their belongings were not to be inherited by any heirs. Even if their belongings were to be few in number, they would have been of the highest quality available at the time. To those knights who grew to become art collectors, their formal family connections would have also stood them in good stead when seeking to acquire works of art from artists who were patronized by their family or who may have operated within the same courtly circles.

However in the Hospitaller context, one over-arching purpose to art collecting can be seen to stand out. As a composite of personal aesthetic choices, art collecting would have presented a creative form of self-fashioning, and self-identity at a personal level, quite separate from the formal religious and military identity carried by all knights of the Order of St John. Stephen Greenblatt has observed how, in the sixteenth century, there first appeared to be an increased self-consciousness in the 'fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process'.⁸² Greenblatt applied his scholarship to the literary figures of the century, from Thomas More to Shakespeare. However one may also recognise a symmetry with the self-fashioning of Hospitaller art collectors, through the indicators identified by Greenblatt.⁸³ These indicators are: 1) that self-fashioning describes the practice of parents and teachers; 2) that it is linked to manners or demeanor, particularly that of the elite and it may suggest hypocrisy or deception, an adherence to mere outward ceremony; and 3) that it suggests representation of one's nature or intention in speech or actions. Greenblatt's findings correspond to the more recent art historical scholarship on the intellectual and social foundations of the development of art collections, and help to flesh out a better understanding of the art collector's intent and practice. Within the Hospitaller community, where hierarchical relations were influenced by age, status and gender roles,⁸⁴ the fashioning of self-identity through the accumulation of works of art provided an eloquent means of establishing a knight's standing amongst his peers. The assembling of a collection of works of art was a unique statement made through a series of choices reflecting a collector's identity, encompassing one's own familial, educational, spiritual and political background, while fashioning a nuanced form of masculinity amidst the community, in stark contrast with the violence permeating Hospitaller life.⁸⁵ These aspects of Hospitaller art collecting correspond to the earlier-mentioned indicators established by Greenblatt. Thus the quality and significance of the individual pieces in a collection would have also conveyed a measure of a collector's ability in assessing a work of art, as well as the means that he enjoyed in order to be able to acquire it.

⁸² Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, Chicago, 2005, 2.

⁸³ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 3.

⁸⁴ E. Buttigieg, *Nobility, Faith and Masculinity: The Hospitaller Knights of Malta c.1580-1700*, New York, 2011, 3.

⁸⁵ Buttigieg, *Nobility, Faith and Masculinity*, 11-17.

The large art collections listed in the *spogli*, that is, those collections consisting of over fifty works of art, included several genres, and therefore permit a study aimed at understanding the range of artistic interests expressed by Hospitaller knight collectors in early modern Malta. A study of the secular genres amongst works of art listed in the *spogli* here leads to the consideration of the manner in which early modern paintings and sculptures contributed to the self-fashioning of identity.

A broad survey of these themes reveals that they shed light on two aspects of Hospitaller identity. Firstly aspects that indicate the self-fashioning of identity by *individual* knights are suggested through the presence of images of allegories, landscapes, battle scenes, marine subjects, portraits and still life paintings, as expressions of a further sophistication of choice and to some extent, erudition. Some collections also include paintings with mythological or literary themes. Secondly, the *communal* identity of membership in the Order of St John is highlighted in pictorial form, typified by images relating to its charitable work, its Hospital, its fortifications, its navy and its costumes as well as to its history. The themes corresponding with the communal identity engendered by membership in the Order of St John can be seen to orbit around the role of the Order and its history. The theme of charity and acts of mercy are mainly depicted in allegorical form, or in images of charitable work conducted by identifiable personages. The military of the Order in its defence of *La Religione* is also present in representations of battle scenes, as well as in aerial views of the fortified landscape of Malta. The following presents a more detailed analysis of how such images acted as an expression of belonging to the Order of St John, giving pictorial form to a community's collective memory and identity.

7.3.1 *Allegories of Charity and the Seven Acts of Mercy*

The artistic theme of Christian charity was comparable to noble liberality, favours of friendship and neighbourly generosity, as an age-old core belief with classical roots, as described in the writings of Seneca, who qualified the disinterested duality of gift-giving with the words, 'How sweet, how precious is a gift, for which the giver will not suffer us to pay even our thanks, which he forgot that he had given even while he was giving it.'⁸⁶ Christian charity started with the love of God, which was then transmitted as love of others. As a form of gift-giving, the donor was supposed to expect reciprocation for charity from God alone: the Lord would be 'pleased' by acts of mercy made in the right spirit, and by the Catholic view, they would contribute to one's salvation. Charity could be practised with one's kin, friends or neighbours, but it was viewed most characteristically in terms of compassion and mercy for others in need or with afflictions, whether they were close or not.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Seneca, *De Beneficiis* II, 6. I thank Stephen d'Evelyn for kindly drawing my attention to these lines.

⁸⁷ Zemon-Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth Century France*, 15.

The theme of charity (*'carità'*) was one of the three theological virtues represented in the fresco paintings inside the *Sala del Gran Consiglio* the foremost hall of the Palace of the Grand Masters, and flanked the composition that depicted the assistance sent by the Viceroy in Sicily to the Grand Master inside Fort St Angelo three months into the Siege of Malta of 1565. The pictorial theme of Charity was also represented in private collections.⁸⁸ As a form of almsgiving, charitable deeds were part of the conduct expected of noblemen and was subsequently an act that was appropriate to Hospitaller knights. One painting found in the inventory of the collection of the Grand Master Vasconcellos was that of St Louis of France in the act of almsgiving.⁸⁹ Several of the Hospitaller *spogli*, particularly in the *quinto*, outlining a knight's bequests, include endowments of money to the charitable foundations of the Order.⁹⁰

An extension of the individual act of Christian charity was the Order's primary role in maintaining its Hospital, with the Grand Master's participation in tending to the sick as part of his magistral Hospitaller role (Fig. 124), in fulfilling one of the acts of mercy given in the Gospel according to St Matthew.⁹¹ In the mural painting Allegory of the Triumph of the Order of St John by Mattia Preti above the main door of the Conventual church (Fig. 63), Grand Master Rafael Cotoner is prominently displayed attending to a patient in the Order's *Sacra Infermeria*. At the start of the eighteenth century, the private bed-chamber of Grand Master Perellos was refurbished, probably by his favourite Maltese artist Alessio Erardi (1669-1727) who executed a frieze of six oil-on-canvas paintings that portraying the seven Acts of Mercy through compositions based on biblical episodes (Fig. 125). The artist composed his paintings in a classical, Poussin-esque style which was little practised in Malta at the time, and suggests a Roman point of artistic reference.⁹² The artist replicated the format of the frescoes by Matteo Perez d'Aleccio and by Leonello Spada, in encompassing the compositions within frames, and painting a cartouche beneath each one to explain the narrative and to give its biblical source.⁹³

⁸⁸ Fra Francois Budes Tertre Joan (d. 1674) owned an alabaster statue of figure of Charity; AOM 931 (12) No. 3, f.8v: '*Statues d'alabastre, une Charité et trois figures*'. Fra Rene Vexel du Tertre (d.1666) owned a painting depicting Roman Charity; AOM 931 (12) No. 5, f.17v: '*un tableau de Charité Romayne*'.

⁸⁹ AOM 924, No. 3, f.30v: '*S. Luigi Re di Francia in atto di dar elemosina*'

⁹⁰ Charity was the the main driving force behind all forms of social aid extended by the State and by the Church. The Foundation for the Redemption of Slaves (*Monte di Redenzione*) was set up in 1607 to procure money for the ransom of Maltese men and women who had fallen slaves in Muslim countries. The Women's Hospital of Valletta was set up in 1625. A Hospice (*L'Ospizio*) for indigent men and women was set up in 1729. Orphanages were set up in 1606 and in 1710; Paul Cassar, 'The Medical and Social Services under the Knights', in *Hospitaller Malta 1530-1798*, ed. by V. Mallia Milanese, Malta, 1993, 475 - 82.

⁹¹ Matthew 25: 35-40, 'For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me'.

⁹² Alessio Erardi first trained under his father, Stefano Erardi. As the son of a well-established artist (Stefano was the only Maltese artist to execute an altarpiece inside St John's Conventual church) Alessio's talents may have been made known early on to the Order. He left Malta in 1695 to study in Rome, where he spent five years. He had painted Perellos's portrait in 1704, the latter having engaged the artist on the ceiling painting of the Oratory of the Blessed Sacrament. ACM Ms 257, ff.143 - 145, entry dated 13th May 1712, quoted in Bernadine Scicluna, *A Stylistic Analysis of Stefano and Alessio Erardi's paintings* (unpublished master's dissertation, University of Malta, 1997) 21, 22.

⁹³ The biblical episodes inscribed are the following: '*HOSPITIO EXCIPIERE ADVENAS, Genes.19.2*', '*LIBERARE CAPTIVOS, Jerem 19.1*', '*POTERE SITIENTES, 1.Reg.18.4*', '*VESTIRE NUDOS, Job, 31.16.Ecc*', '*AEGRIS*

The pictorial narratives were flanked by allegorical figures executed in grisaille, standing with their respective attributes within *trompe l'oeil* niches and inscribed 'La Fama', 'Eternidad', 'La Clemencia', 'La Verdad', 'La Inocencia' and 'La Paz'.⁹⁴ The Grand Master woke up daily to these paintings, a personal reminder of Hospitaller piety and religious duty expressed in allegorical form and in pictorial narrative. For his funerary monument inside the Conventual church,⁹⁵ Perellos engaged Giuseppe Mazzuoli (1644-1725) who sculpted two life-size allegorical figures in marble, one of Charity represented by a woman giving suck to her child, the other of Justice (Fig. 126). Although relatively few knights would have had access to seeing the mural paintings inside the Palace, the magistral choice of theme would have been known and possibly emulated. Four oval paintings depicting moral virtues, presumably the Acts of Mercy, were listed in the *spoglio* of Fra Giuseppe Maria Cicinelli (d.1780) displayed in the *Galleria* within his Naples palazzo.⁹⁶

7.3.2 Hospitaller history

The history of the Order does not appear as a theme within Hospitaller inventories of paintings. This lacuna may be difficult to explain, as the Order's four-hundred year history up to the Great Siege of 1565 provided several worthy episodes for depiction. The Siege of Rhodes of 1480 was depicted in a hall, called the 'Roodis chambre' next to the bedroom of Henry VIII in Windsor Castle,⁹⁷ and the Siege of 1565 was included in a fresco cycle executed by Nicolo' Pomarancio in the Ducal Palace of Castiglione del Lago around 1574 highlighting episodes in the life of Ascanio della Corgna (d.1571), who was responsible for overseeing the *Gran Soccorso* which had sailed to the aid of Malta.⁹⁸ Indeed key instances from the illustrious history of the Order were depicted by Leonello Spada in fresco cycles inside three public halls within the Palace of the Grand Master,⁹⁹ yet none are listed as themes or subjects as easel paintings in the *spogli*. One instance of a painting with an oblique reference to the Victory of the Great Siege, through its commemorative procession, is that listed as '*La Processione della vittoria che si fa annualmente nella Città Valletta a Malta*' in the inventory of Fra Cesare

CURARE, 2 Sam.34.12', 'ESURIENTES PASCERE, Genes, 18.2, Ec',⁹³ as well as a two lines of explanatory text, also in Latin.

⁹⁴ The inscriptions below the allegorical figures are in Spanish, to reflect the Aragonese origins of Grand Master Ramon Perellos y Roccaful; the allegories represent Fame, Eternity, Mercy, Truth, Innocence and Peace.

⁹⁵ The Grand Master's *spoglio* includes mention that the monument had been commissioned in his lifetime; AOM 925, f.25r: '*avendo noi disposto in vita il suo tumolo*'.

⁹⁶ AOM 931 (38) No. 31, f.137: '*Quattro ovati delle virtù morali con cornici dorati ed intagliati colle [...] cimasi di buona mano*'

⁹⁷ Rawlinson MSS, Bodleian Library, Oxford, quoted in Giovanni Bonello, 'Henry VIII: Wives, Lovers, Martyrs of the Order of Malta', in *Histories of Malta XI: Travesties and Dynasties*, Malta, 2010, 22.

⁹⁸ Giovanni Bonello, 'An Overlooked Eyewitness's Account of the Great Siege', in *Histories of Malta III: Versions and Diversions*, Malta, 2002, 127.

⁹⁹ The episodes represented in fresco are the 'Grand Master offering his services to the King of Jerusalem in 1190', the 'battle at Ascalon', the 'Taking of Damiatta in 1210', the 'Restoration of the Walls of Jerusalem in 1228', the 'Routing of the Turks near Antioch in 1245', the 'Order coming to the assistance of King Louis of France', the 'Capture of Rhodes in 1309', the 'Grand Master's entrance into Viterbo in 1524', amongst others.

Nicoló Losa (d.1767, Turin),¹⁰⁰ and corresponds to a painting on the theme in the national art collection of Malta (Fig. 127).

The lacuna raises a number of questions and deserves an in-depth study of its own. A brief mention of some suggestions may suffice for the purpose of this thesis. A study on the selective depiction of episodes from the Order's history in the Palace may offer new insights on the role of art in mediating the relationship between the Order's prominent failures, namely the loss of Jerusalem and the loss of Rhodes in 1523, and the Order's belief in divine providence and the teaching of the Scripture that defeat was God's punishment for sin into which the good might have fallen temporarily.¹⁰¹ More specific to this thesis is whether the commissioning of such paintings, as pictorial chronicles on the collective history of the Order of St John were considered to be exclusively appropriate to the Grand Master of the Order rather than to individuals in the ranks of the Order. It is relevant to consider the situation that arose between Matteo Perez d'Aleccio and Grand Master Verdalle when the artist reproduced engravings of his Great Siege frescoes without magistral permission, resulting in their prohibition and withdrawal from the art market.¹⁰²

Another question would be whether the commissioning of such themes also demanded a valued medium such as fresco or tapestry, within palatial settings,¹⁰³ rather than mere easel painting with its more modest connotations of ease of transfer and thereby loss of context. The depiction of historical moments, chosen for their extraordinary significance to the outcome of subsequent events, may have only been appropriate to grand narrative style of pictorial composition.

A third consideration is whether Hospitaller knights in the ranks of the Order felt any engagement with historical episodes, other than those in which they actively participated. Consideration may be given to ex-voto paintings commissioned by knights, in thanksgiving for being saved from a dangerous situation, though such paintings would be presented to a church or chapel, usually in fulfilment of a vow; ex-voto paintings were never intended for the restricted display of a private collection. One notable example of an ex-voto painting related to a historical episode was the altarpiece, Madonna of the Fleet by Antonello Riccio (active 1576), showing the Battle of Lepanto surmounted by the three figures of the Virgin Mary and Child, St John the Baptist and St Lucia, while the lowermost register shows an unidentified Hospitaller

¹⁰⁰ AOM 931 (37) No. 37, f.173.

¹⁰¹ For a discussion on the frequent invocation of divine providence in the course of Hospitaller diplomacy, as an explanation for defeat and failure, refer to David Allen, 'The Order of St John as a 'School for Ambassadors' in Counter-Reformation Europe', in *The Military Orders Vol. 2: Welfare and Warfare*, ed. by Helen Nicholson, Aldershot, 1998, 366-7.

¹⁰² The reason for the Grand Master's displeasure may have been the artist's dedication of the engravings to Duke Ferdinand I of Tuscany though this has not yet been ascertained; Albert Ganado, *Valletta – Città' Nova*, Malta, 2003, 269-290.

¹⁰³ The Siege of Rhodes of 1480 was the subject of a series of tapestries that were once displayed inside the magistral palace of Rhodes; refer to Chapter III.

knight kneeling in thanks, with an unidentified coat-of-arms in the lower right hand side (Fig. 128). The painting was displayed as an altarpiece within the Church of the Immaculate Conception, known as Sarria Church, named after Fra Martin Sarria who commissioned the building.¹⁰⁴

In contrast to the absence of pictorial chronicles of the Order, the quasi-mythical episode of the freedom from captivity by three knights from the dungeons of the Sultan Al Hafiz in 1134, popularly known as the 'Legend of Ismeria' is found in more than one Hospitaller inventory. The account of the adventures of three brothers from Laon, Picardie, who were knights of the Order of St John, is given in some detail by Bosio.¹⁰⁵ The legend is depicted in a series of compositions as a ceiling decoration in oil on canvas in one of the anti-rooms leading to the Grand Master's private bedchamber. Easel paintings portraying the Legend of Ismeria are also usually found as a series, such as the ones currently found in St Dominic's Convent, Valletta (Fig. 129) and in Maltese private collections. Ten were listed in the inventory of Fra Ignatio Diotallesi (d.1682),¹⁰⁶ while four others painted in a large format were in the inventory of Fra Maurizio Pansier (d.1787).¹⁰⁷

7.3.3 Views of Malta

One pictorial theme intrinsically tied to Hospitaller history is that of Hospitaller territory, communicated through landscape painting and cartographic images. As had happened with Rhodes, Malta attained a new interest for European rulers and others seeking the economic well-being generated by the Order's activity and the personal wealth invested into the country.

The notion of the Hospitaller landscape – that is firstly inherent in the inferred landscape of devotional images discussed earlier, and secondly that is prefigured in the pictorial landscape of

¹⁰⁴ Fra Sarria had taken part in the Battle of Lepanto, however the knight portrayed in the ex-voto is believed to be a different person. Giovanni Bonello, 'The Murder of El Greco's Knight of Malta', in *Histories of Malta III: Versions and Diversions*, Malta, 2002, 118-120. The ex-voto painting by Antonello Riccio (fl. 1575) forms part of the national art collection of Malta (Inv. 1615-6) and is currently on display in the National Maritime Museum, Malta.

¹⁰⁵ Bosio, *Dell'Istoria della Sacra Religione*, I, Rome, 1594, quoted in Giovanni Bonello 'Knights in Slavery: *Captivi in manibus infidelium*', in *Histories of Malta Vol V: Reflections and Rejections*, Malta, 2004, 63-68. The Ismeria legend goes that in around 1134 three Knights were taken into slavery. The Sultan of Egypt was determined to convert them to Islam, sending the most intelligent priests to convert the young noblemen, yet all were unsuccessful; the Sultan then sent his daughter Ismeria, to use her beauty to convert the young men, however Ismeria was the one to be converted, and asked the knights to carve a statue of the Virgin Mary for her out of a log that she handed to them. That night a statue appeared miraculously inside the prison cell, although not one of the three knights knew how to carve. On seeing her log untouched, Ismeria asked to be converted to Christianity with such joy that the statue was named Our Lady of Liesse (joy). Ismeria left Cairo in secret with the three knights, arriving in France where she was baptised. A church was dedicated to the Madonna of Liesse that became a popular pilgrimage site, built close to the village of Liesse Saint-Marie. The devotion of the Madonna of Liesse was brought to Malta by the knights, who built a church on the marina; the Liesse Madonna was the icon they prayed to for protection against enslavement.

¹⁰⁶ AOM 931 (30) No. 24, f.150: '*li dieci quadri dell'istoria d'Ismeria che sono nella Sala*'; another ten paintings titled '*Dieci pezzi quadri dell'Istoria di fratelli di Lies*' appeared in the inventory of Fra Bartolommeo Diotallesi (d.1698), suggesting the same series was acquired shortly after the death of Fra Ignatio Diotallesi; AOM 931 (32) No. 20, f.174v.

¹⁰⁷ AOM 928, f.66: '*quattro grandi quadri che rapp.ano l'Istoria d'Ismeria*'.

the various aerial views of Malta listed in the Hospitaller *spogli* – can be unpacked to reveal the co-relation between geography and Hospitaller art collecting, in its conceptual manifestations as well as in its materiality.

Tracing the history of the known instances of representations of Malta, one can see that the conventions applied to landscape views of Malta emerge out of a 'mapped' perspective, determined by the geographic and political links between Malta and the Kingdom of Sicily. The earliest known depictions of Malta were essentially cartographic. Such depictions had their origins in the Order's acceptance of the Islands as a fiefdom from Charles V in 1530. As printed works published in Lyon, Rome, Venice, and the Netherlands, maps which located Malta in the middle of the Mediterranean were intended for a wide distribution.¹⁰⁸ In 1565, the Siege of Malta prompted a spate of 'war-news' illustrations blending cartographic information with figurative illustration of each event located in seemingly 'actual space'. According to the historical geographer, J.B. Harley, 'Maps are images with historically specific codes of meaning; they identify not only a 'surface' or literal level of meaning, but also a 'deeper' level associated with the symbolic dimension in the act of sending or receiving a message'.¹⁰⁹ The symbolic dimension of maps is enabled through visually rhetorical elements such as cartouches and heraldic devices, while the very survey, of terrain, or of a city, implied the ownership of that land. It is worth recalling that the Order's territorial relationship with Maltese land was an unusual one.¹¹⁰ Even though the Order of St John was effectively handed the government of Malta by Charles V in 1530, the individual Hospitallers did not constitute a land-owning class - Knights had no successors to inherit from them, while their belongings reverted to the Order on their death. Furthermore, the Maltese islands were not acquired by conquest.

While the vogue for cartographic views, as decoration, started as a late fifteenth-century genre in Mantua,¹¹¹ the pictorial theme flourished as mural art in tapestry or fresco, from the middle- to late-sixteenth century in Florence, Rome and Malta.¹¹² The main subject would be a battle, usually a victory, depicted over territory that would be recognised in its map-like appearance.

¹⁰⁸ They spread to different parts of Europe where the revenue-generating territories and commanderies of the Order were located and where the individual Knights' families resided. Other maps, in manuscript form, were drawn by engineers of the Order illustrating their proposals for strengthening the defences of the harbour area, as well as their plans for the new city on the promontory overlooking the natural harbour. Albert Ganado, 'The Representation of Birgu and Fort St Angelo in Old Maps and Views' in *Birgu: A Maltese Maritime City*, Vol. II, ed. by L. Bugeja, M. Buhagiar and S. Fiorini, Malta, 1993, 553.

¹⁰⁹ J.B. Harley, 'Maps, Knowledge and Power', in *Iconography of Landscape*, ed. by D. Cosgrove and S. Daniels, Cambridge, 1988, 279.

¹¹⁰ Following the blistering siege of Rhodes by Soliman the Magnificent in 1522, the Order of St John departed from the Greek island with the honours of war. The Order was destined to seek help to establish a new home from which to undertake the reconquest of Rhodes, a mission that was aligned with Charles V's empire as bulwark against Turkish advance. Malta was a fiefdom of the Aragonese crown of Sicily and was offered to the Order in 1523. In June 1530, the Knights of the Order of St John took possession of their new fief, moving into the harbour town of Birgu, and set about strengthening the Island's defences.

¹¹¹ Molly Bourne, 'Francesco II Gonzaga and Maps as Palace Decoration in Renaissance Mantua', *Imago Mundi*, 51, 1999, 51-2.

¹¹² Jurgen Schultz, 'Maps as metaphors: Mural map cycles of the Italian Renaissance', in *Art and Cartography: Six Historical Essays*, ed. by David Woodward, Chicago, 1987, 97-122.

In the sixteenth-century views of Malta, the country is mainly represented as an entire island, an image emphasising its vulnerability from sea-ward attack by the Ottoman navy. Such images continued into the seventeenth century, harking back to the prototypes established by Siege maps and the Palace fresco cycle by Matteo Perez d'Aleccio (Fig. 8). One well known set of such views, were twelve panel paintings of the Great Siege, bequeathed by Grand Master Vasconcellos as a gift to Fra Giocondo Accarigi, with the express instruction that they be taken by the Hospitaller knight to his palace in Siena.¹¹³ It has been suggested that these may be the same paintings which once belonged to the collection of Charles I, of which eight are now in the National Maritime Museum collection in Greenwich.¹¹⁴

By the turn of the eighteenth century, Valletta takes on a specific form of representation, with a spate of paintings composed around an aerial perspective which privileged the city and its harbour in the level of detail to which it was depicted (Fig. 130).¹¹⁵ The popularity of such paintings amongst Hospitaller knights implies an iconic status to the typology, with their inclusion in a number of inventories.¹¹⁶ To this day, a number of similar paintings are found in some key public collections in London (Fig. 131), Rome and Cortona,¹¹⁷ as well as others sold by international auction houses,¹¹⁸ suggesting that the inherent values of the typology held relevance to collectors overseas. There are different ways to explain how such paintings arrived

¹¹³ AOM 924, f.29v: 'item dichiariamo haver donato al Comm.e Fra Giocondo Accarigi Seg.ro del N.ro Comun Tesoro li dodecinni quadri nelli quali e dipinto l'Assedio di Malta con conditione che le dibbia mandare in Siena in casa sua per memoria dell'affettione n.ra verso la persona sua.'

¹¹⁴ Giovanni Bonello, 'Francesco Potenzano and Matteo Perez d'Aleccio: The first painters in St John's', in *Histories of Malta Vol. VI: Ventures and Adventures*, Malta, 2005, 46. Fra Accarigi was one executor of Vasconcellos' disproporzionamento. He was repaid scudi 2069.4 covering the price 'p[er] tanti cassata .. consig[na]ti al S. Comm.e Fra Giocondo Accarigi uno dell'esecutori dello spropporzionamento p compire a una parte de legati'. Such a high price points to the large crates that were necessitated by the twelve panel paintings that measured 1.3 x 2 metres each.

¹¹⁵ The dating of the paintings is known from the date of building of the fortifications, such as Fort Manoel, built by Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena starting in 1723, and similarly datable details within the composition.

¹¹⁶ AOM 931 (30) No. 4, f.15: Fra Francesco Spada (d. Lucca, 1677), 'No. 22, un quadro delle fortificationi di Malta'. AOM 931 (3) No. 26, f.242v: Fra Bali Diego Veterano (d. c.1684), 'Otro [quadro] imagen/imapa de Malta'. AOM 931 (31) No. 16, f.89: Fra Giovanni Battista Brancaccio (d. Malta, 1687), 'Due Prospetti della Città Valletta'. AOM 931 (3) No. 31, f.308: Fra Martin de Novar (d. Malta, 1692), 'Due prospettive della Città Valletta fatta a penna'. AOM 931 (32) No. 12, f.13: Fra Domenico Cleria (d. Malta, 1695), 'Una quatro grande dell'isola di Malta'. The *spoglio* includes other aerial views of un-named locations: 'Sei quadri piccoli di prospettive', as well as eight landscape paintings by a named artist: 'altri ... *Paesaggi tutti li sudetti di Stefano*'. AOM 931 (4) No. 7, f.42: Fra Bali Emanuele Tordesillas (d.Madrid, 1702), 'Otro quadro Grande de la Isla de Malta con marco negro'. AOM 931 (4) No. 9, f.106v: Fra Manuel Arias (Madrid, 1703), 'Dos quadro prolongado de Malta en perspective'. AOM 931 (35) No. 19, f.143: Fra Silvio Sortino (d. Malta, 1721), 'Due Prospettive di Malta /... Quattro Prospettive di Malta'. AOM 931 (39) No. 26, f.105: Fra Capponi (d. 1739), 'Quattro quadri grandi ... rappr. la Pianta dell'Isola di Malta con otto mappe gialle'. AOM 931 (37) No. 16, f.65v: Fra Pio Francesco Gori (d. Malta, 1755), 'Tutta l'Isola di Malta'. AOM 931 (37) No. 26, f.101v: Fra Bartolommeo Tommasi (d. 1768), 'La Veduta di Malta'. AOM 931 (38) No. 4, f.10: Fra Flaminio Crivelli (d. Milan, 1781) 'quattro quadri bislunghi rapp. Malta in varij aspetti'.

¹¹⁷ Aerial views of Valletta and the two harbours are found in the Wallace Collection (*Malta: the Grand Harbour of Valletta*, Oil on canvas, 106 x 207.3 cm, P493), in the Museo dell'Accademia di Etrusca, Cortona (*View of the Island of Malta*); at the Headquarters of the Order of Malta in Rome (*L'eduta di Malta*, attributed to J. Ruiz, and several other similar paintings without attribution). Other similar paintings are found in private collections in Malta, some having been acquired from overseas collections in recent years.

¹¹⁸ 'A view of Valletta, Malta' (before 1740) attributed to Juan Ruiz (active Naples, mid-eighteenth century), oil on copper, 21 x 43.5cm, sold at Sotheby's in December 2005. Also, the 'aerial landscape view of Valletta', early eighteenth century, acquired at auction in Brussels now displayed at Izola Bank, Malta; as well as the four panoramic views, signed and dated 'Alessandro Grevenbrock, Padova, 1736' sold at auction in Paris in 1998, in Alfred Bonnici, 'Alessandro Grevenbrock's superb views of Malta in 1736', *Treasures of Malta*, 10: 1, 55-58.

at overseas collections. However their very presence establishes that this type of representation of Malta, mediated through aerial views of Valletta, held a resonance that went beyond aesthetic considerations.

Such paintings are extraordinary as '*vedute*', in the chosen angle of representation, and should not be compared to the highly contemporary cityscapes of Venice, Rome or London by the hands of Canaletto, Bellotto or Guardi and which situate the viewer at eye-level with the scene ahead. Tempting as it may be to try to find a reason for these paintings in historical developments of the eighteenth century, such reasons will not necessarily illuminate the intrinsic meaning of the paintings. Instead, one needs to work empirically by looking closely at the compositions. Doing so would allow us to conceive of the technique and manner of their execution, and thereby to re-imagine the conceptual framework or 'world-view' that the artist succeeded in recreating in paint.

The subject and composition of the landscape paintings of Valletta and its surrounding harbours could not have been sketched 'on location', but must have been entirely conceived within the confines of an artist's studio. Other than the Mediterranean skyscape and the deep blue sea, there is nothing else the artist would have been able to observe *in situ* in the absence of any high vantage point in Malta. The pictorial treatment of the city and harbour towns enclosed within fortified walls, imparts a sense of volume and solidity that typically stands out from the remainder of the Maltese landscape. The even, ambient luminance is spread over the whole composition, yet the heightened light over the Valletta promontory allows the city to stand out in a manner that appears staged. The aerial viewpoint over the city may lead one into thinking that the composition was crafted out of a cartographic plan. While maps and plans have often been cited as the template for the picturing of *vedute*, the pictorial translation of the two-dimensional imagery of maps into the three-dimensional imagery of paintings has not been adequately explained. My study of aerial landscape paintings of Hospitaller Malta has led to the consideration of an alternative, as yet hypothetical, template which permits the evocation of the volume and topography of a cityscape more effectively.

The following hypothesis on the depiction of aerial views of Valletta has arisen out of a new application of Svetlana Alpers's theory as elucidated in her 2005 book *The Vexations of Art: Velasquez and Others* on how 'a succession of European painters have taken the studio as the world. Or, we might say that the studio is where the world, as it gets into painting, is experienced.' In understanding the studio environment and considering the apparatus available to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century artists, the landscape paintings of Hospitaller Malta are thus shown to be the result of an extraordinary confluence of artisans and architects responding

to the Order's military plans together with artists responding to the Hospitaller art collector's desire for a pictorial representation underling the Order's urban and military achievements.

A three-dimensional model of a walled city, done to scale, would have embodied the landscape artist's subject as effectively as an arrangement of objects for a still life painting. Three-dimensional models of the fortified city of Valletta and of the harbour towns were readily available in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Malta. Stone or wooden models were part of the apparatus of fortification architects, and of military engineers, who made use of the readily available skills of Maltese *scalpellini* to create three-dimensional, small-scale reconstructions of the plans that they would be about to propose (Fig. 132).¹¹⁹ In a forthcoming publication on Italian architects in Malta, Francesco Menchetti has traced a number of sixteenth-century instances of the use of models to enable discussions between the architect, the engineer and the commissioning entity, on the latest proposals for the defence of Valletta,¹²⁰ where he describes uses of stone models by Bartolommeo Genga,¹²¹ Baldassare Lanci,¹²² and Fra Centorio Cagnolo.¹²³ The practice of constructing architectural models of fortification walls is known to have continued into the seventeenth century. In 1681, the Flemish Hospitaller knight and military engineer Carlos de Grunenberg prepared scale models in stone for his projects.¹²⁴

Grunenberg's stone models can be seen today at the Palace Armoury and include details of the buildings adjacent to the fortifications, providing a relative measure of scale to the proposed walls (Fig. 133). The cube-like details of the buildings are also comparable to the painted roofscape visible in aerial views of Valletta, and provide a strong element in the case for the use of stone models by artists depicting the city. The aerial angle of the composition is thus

¹¹⁹ The use of a scale model in wax for military purposes was already familiar to the Order in Rhodes, as recorded by the mention of a wax model of the fortress of Rhodes prepared by Maestro Zuenio, commissioned by Grand Master L'Isle Adam to be sent to the Pope in Rome. Bosio, *Dell'Istoria della Sacra Religione*, II, Rome, 1602, 624, quoted in Spiteri, *The Art of Fortress Building*, 150.

¹²⁰ Menchetti also quotes the utility of scale models to rulers of distant cities, citing Philip II who kept models of fortresses, as well as plans, to maintain control of his empire. Francesco Menchetti, *Architects and Knights: The influence of Italian Architects in Malta during the Renaissance* (forthcoming publication). I wish to thank Giovanni Bonello, General Editor of Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti, for kindly making available an advance copy of the relevant extracts.

¹²¹ Genga used a '*modello di rilievo*' to propose the new city walls of Valletta; the modello provided the basis for the decision by the Council of the Order to proceed, and was later transported to Rome to be shown to Pius IV who funded the building of the new city's fortifications; Genga had also produced three-dimensional models to propose new buildings in Birgu such as churches and a palatial residence for the Grand Master. Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' piu' eccellenti architetti, pittori e scultori* ..[Firenze, 1568], L. Bellosi and A. Rossi, eds, v.5, Turin, 1986, 225, quoted in Menchetti *Architects and Knights*: Chapter I, 'The Contribution of the Della Rovere Architects to the Foundation of Valletta'; De Giorgio, *A City by an Order*, 47.

¹²² Genga's successor, Baldassare Lanci, produced a model that demonstrated 'all the roads, the squares, the civil dwellings, the palaces, the churches and the hospitals'; Menchetti, *Architects and Knights*, Chapter I.

¹²³ Following the Siege of 1565 and the hastening of plans to build the city in the face of another Turkish threat, Cagnolo ordered a wooden model of the fortress with improvements on previous plans; Menchetti, *Architects and Knights*, Chapter I.

¹²⁴ Spiteri, *The Art of Fortress Building*, 148-150. Other instances are known from correspondence between Don Giovanni de' Medici (1567-1621) citing accompanying models and drawings; Fondo Chigi MS N III 61, '*secondo il modello mandato da me l'anno passato ... che si vede nell'aggiunto modello e disegno*', quoted in Spiteri, *The Art of Fortress Building*, pp.150, 565 fn.36.

comparable to the artist's position in relation to a stone model, as an arrangement of still life objects.

One may hypothesize that other apparatus, such as the *camera oscura*, may have been used by the early modern artist, to enable an accurately proportioned composition of aerial landscape paintings as well as its speedy and far less laborious completion (Fig. 134). The *camera oscura* would have aided the depiction of the volume of the stone model/cityscape, whereas the remainder of the landscape would have required its completion by other means. This would explain why aerial views of Valletta show a difference in treatment between the built landscape and the rest of the island with the latter depicted in a manner that is akin to traditional landscape painting, that is, from the artist's imagination. The land around the fortified city and towns is depicted in various states of nature, from the cultivated fields on the left to the rough seas in the foreground, and the shifting clouds in the upper register, which taken together act as a foil in contrasting the enclosed shelter of the city with the exposed countryside and open seas. Such aerial landscape views present a composition which focuses on the built landscape of Valletta, thus highlighting the Order's achievement in creating its new stronghold in the Mediterranean base, and its success at maintaining it for over two centuries.

7.3.4 Other landscapes

Hospitaller knights never discarded the identity of their homeland, being organized in eight smaller communities which were named in terms of the language spoken, as described in Chapter I.¹²⁵ The paintings listed in the inventories give a glimpse into the kinds of links kept by some Hospitaller knights with their homeland. Portraits of family members, as well as portraits of royal or ducal figures, served to evoke the memory of the other overseas community to which a knight continued to belong, while landscape paintings of one's country could recall an alternative sense of place other than the Order's head quarters in Malta.¹²⁶ One inventory includes nine landscape and seascape paintings by a named artist, 'Poleo'.¹²⁷ On the other hand,

¹²⁵ All the knights hailing from the Italian peninsula were united within the *Lingua d'Italia*; French speaking knights belonged to one of three langues: the *Langue* of Provence, that of Auvergne and that of France; Iberian knights were grouped under the *Langue* of Castile, Portugal and Leon, and the *Langue* of Aragon. After the Reformation and the subsequent reduction in numbers that followed in the Order's ranks, English knights were grouped with those from Bavaria and were named the Anglo-Bavarian *Langue*, while knights from German, Prussian and Bohemian territories remained numerous enough to be grouped as the *Langue* of Allemand. The *langues* were housed within palatial buildings termed *auberges* or *albergie*, where novices and young knights could reside for a few years, until such time when most would move out to their own residence in an apartment or palazzo in Valletta, or until the appointment to a commandery or an ambassadorial post which would require them taking up residence in other territories.

¹²⁶ Landscape paintings that include mountains would represent other lands; AOM 931 (4) No. 13, f.219, 288v: Fra Villavicencio (d.1708), '*Quattro Países al Monteria*'; AOM 931 (4) No. 20, f.288: Fra Don Felix Zapata, '*Seis países de Monteria*'.

¹²⁷ AOM 931 (34) No. 25, f.215v: Fra Andrea Di Giovanni (d.1715), '*Nove paesaggi di mare e terreno mano di Poleo*'. The name does not appear in leading art databases, suggesting that 'Poleo' may be a familiar name, or an Italianized version of foreign names, such as the Dutch landscape artist Cornelis van Poelemburgh (Rome c.1617-c.1625), or the French engraver Francois de Poilly (Rome 1649-1656). Other named artists appear next to the paintings in the *spoglio* of those acquired directly by Fra Di Giovanni, namely 11 paintings by Mattia Preti, 2 by

landscape paintings or *vedute* could also represent the estate forming part of priorates or commanderies: a number of inventories include landscape paintings other than images of Malta.¹²⁸ However none actually indicate the location.¹²⁹ Other landscape paintings include architectural scenes, possibly depicting one's family palazzo or country villa,¹³⁰ and aerial views (*prospettive*) that indicated entire estates or territories.¹³¹ The magistral art collection included nineteen unidentified *Paesaggi* attributed to Paul Bril, Rosa da Tivoli, and followers of Claude and Poussin, besides others from the Roman and Neapolitan schools.¹³² The magistral collection also included views of architectural ruins, two of which were by Pannini.¹³³ Perhaps most interesting of all are a number of aerial views of Mexican and Spanish locations,¹³⁴ mainly town

Mario Fiori (1603-1673), 1 by Antonio Filocamo (1669-1748), 1 by Agostino Scilla (1629-1700). Paintings by other artists, from the knight's patrimonial inheritance, are by 9 by [Antonio Alberti called il] Barbalonga (1601-1649), 2 by Alonso [?Rodriguez, a contemporary of Barbalonga [1578-1648], and 1 by Antonio Catalano il Vecchio (1560-1605c.).

¹²⁸ The following are some instances of landscape paintings in Hospitaller collections: AOM 931 (4) No. 10, ff.129v, 130: Fra Rocamora (d.1703), '*Nueve paisés grandes sin guarnicion / Tres payses / Otro paysio sin guarnicion*'; AOM 931 (4) No. 7, f.42v: Fra Emanuele Tordesillas (d.1702), '*Doze Paisés medianos con cornixas negras / Otros onze Paisés pequenos p.a sobre puerta Con Cornx faj negras*'; AOM 931 (13) No. 24, f.90: Fra Panisse Boisselet (d.1678), '*Six tableaux a paysage avec leurs cornices dorées aux extremités*'; AOM931 (28) No.6, f.32, Fra Cesare Lopez (d.1666), '*Dodici quadri piccoli paesaggi con cornice indorata*'; AOM 931 (28) No. 9, f.65: Fra Giovanni Mastrilli (d.1669), '*Quattro paesaggi*'; AOM 931 (28) No. 13, f.92: Fra Antonio de Lucia (d.1667), '*dieci paesaggi*'; AOM 931 (29) No. 21, f. 106v: Fra Angelo Marone (d.1674), '*Dieci quadri di paysaggi / Quattro quadri di Paysaggi / Cinque quatri di carta 3 paesi del mondi e l'altri due d'altri paesi*'; AOM 931 (31) No.32, f.205: Fra Paolo Emilio Argeli (d.1692), '*Due paesaggi / Quattro quadri paesaggi*'; AOM 931 (31) No. 16, ff.85v, 87: Fra Gio Batta Brancaccio (d.1686): '*Dodici tondini de Paesaggi con cornicette dorati / dodici tondi di carta pista indorati ... con paesatti diversi*'; AOM 931 (32) No. 12, f.13, Fra Domenico Cleria (d.1695), '*altri ... Paesaggi tutti li sudetti di Stefano / Sei paesaggi di Stefano ... le cornice a serpi come sopra*'; AOM 931 (34) No. 25, f.215: Fra Andrea di Giovanni (d.1715), '*Tutti li quadri antichi della Sala cioè... et altri venti due paesaggi*'; AOM 931 (36) No. 31, f.267, Comm. Fra D. Ettore Marulli, (d. 1763), '*Quadri nro quarant'uno che rapp. Architetture e campagne*'; AOM 931 (37) No. 16, f.65: Fra Pio Francesco Gori (d. 1755), '*Sei paesetti con cornice di legno bianco bislungi ed altri quattro con cornice near, pure con paesetti / due altri quadri ove sono dipinti paesetti*'; AOM 931 (43) No.13, f.46: Francesco Conte de Heiggenlau (d.1688), '*Dodici paesagi*'.

¹²⁹ Fra Lomellino's art collection included landscape views of Rome and Avignon; AOM 931 (32) No. 37, f.239: '*la città di Avignone Longo il Rodano/... Prospettiva dell'Entrata della Porta del Popolo in Roma/ ... Prospettiva della vista di Castel St Angelo*'.

¹³⁰ AOM 931 (40) No. 1, f.31 : Fra Fabrizio Ruffò (d.1723), '*Sei Quadretti piccoli di architettura*'; AOM 931 (28) No. 6, f.32 : Fra Cesare Lopez (d.1666), '*Quattro quadri grandi di prospettive*'; AOM 931 (31) No. 9 f.45: Fra Giulio Sortino (d.1686), '*Quattro quadri di Prospettiva*'; AOM 931 (32) No. 12, f.13: Fra Domenico Cleria (d.1695), '*Sei quadri piccoli di prospettive*'.

¹³¹ AOM 931 (34) No. 18, f.138: Fra Luigi Visconti (d.1713), '*quattro quadri grandoni di paesi*'; AOM 931 (28) No. 6, f.32 : Fra Cesare Lopez (d.1666), '*Quattro quadri grandi di prospettive*'; AOM 931 (31) No. 9 f.45: Fra Giulio Sortino (d.1686), '*Quattro quadri di Prospettiva*'; AOM 931 (32) No. 12, f.13: Fra Domenico Cleria (d.1695), '*Sei quadri piccoli di prospettive*'; AOM 931 (32) No. 9, f.79v: Fra Bartolomeus de Vincentio (d.1690s), '*nove quadri di paesaggio sette grandi e due mezzani*'. AOM 931 (5) No. 19 f.147: D'Aragnas (d.), '*Prospettiva*'; AOM 931 (33) No. 11 f.84v: Fra Cava Grimaldi (d. 1702), '*Un quadro fatto a Prospettica con cornice dorata*'.

¹³² Schiavone, *I Tesori del Palazzo Magistrale*, Cat. nos 69 (della scuola olandese), 77 (di Paul Bril), 80 (*Paesaggio giardiniere della scuola del Caravaggio*), 81 (*Paesaggio con un ponte, della scuola di Claudio*), 82, 83 (*Paesaggio con vari animali della scuola romana*), 85, 86 (da Rosa da Tivoli), 94 (scuola napoletana), 101 (scuola romana), 103 (da Rosa da Tivoli), 110, 137, 141 (scuola romana), 143 (copia presso Nicolo' Pussino), 144 (scuola napoletana), 159 (della scuola di Nicolo' Pussino), 173, 174.

¹³³ Schiavone, *I Tesori del Palazzo Magistrale*, Cat. no. 87: '*Altro quadro ad olio (nel terzo rango), alto palmi 3, largo palmi 2, Uno sfondato con rovine d'architettura, di scuola francese*', Cat. no. 90: '*Altro quadro ad olio, alto palmi 3, largo palmi 2, Rovine antiche, della detta scuola [francese]*', Cat. no. 100: '*Altro ad olio, alto palmi 2, largo palmi 3, rappresenta architetture del Pannini*', Cat. no. 102: '*Altro ad olio, alto palmi 2, largo palmi 3, Architettura pendente, dal già detto Pannini*', Cat. nos. 171: '*Altro ad olio, alto palmi 3½, largo palmi 4½, Antichità e Architetture, della scuola di Vanvitelli*'.

¹³⁴ Schiavone, *I Tesori del Palazzo Magistrale*, Cat. no.122: '*Altro ad olio, alto palmi 4, largo palmi 6, Veduta della Chiesa e Piazza di Santa Cruz, della scuola spagnuola*', Cat. no. 123: '*altro ad olio, Veduta della Piazza di Valladolid in Spagna, della scuola spagnola*', Cat. no. 124: '*altro ad olio, Veduta della Piazza di Santa Maria Nuova colla Carriera, della scuola spagnola*', Cat. no. 125: '*Altro ad olio, Veduta della Piazza Maggiore di Messico, della scuola spagnola*', Cat. No. 126: '*altro ad olio, Veduta di una Piazza da mercato in Spagna, della scuola spagnola*'.

squares portraying important buildings and market scenes, attributed to the early-eighteenth century artist Juan Morlete Ruiz.¹³⁵ Future study of these paintings may reveal the art patron who commissioned them and the means by which they came to form part of the magistral collection.

In another link to Hospitaller activity, that of sea-faring and the *corso*, some landscape paintings mentioned in the inventories portray seascapes and ports.¹³⁶ The magistral art collection included two series of views of seaports, made up of three paintings each.¹³⁷ Other than landscape paintings and aerial views, the *spogli* also mention alternative forms of geographic depiction or portrayals, such as albums of maps,¹³⁸ a *mappamundo*,¹³⁹ loose maps,¹⁴⁰ cosmographic prints or drawings,¹⁴¹ as well as allegorical depictions of the four corners of the world.¹⁴²

7.3.5 Battle scenes

The martial theme would be represented in depictions of naval battles or sieges, and would require that the collector or viewer can recognize a historical moment or episode, by identifying the main figures, through their banners, weapons or even armour, and linking them to one's knowledge of history. Landscape also feature in the background to battle paintings, with key topographical features to aid the viewer at identifying the theatre of war. The Order's early modern history was highlighted at regular intervals by its naval exploits, one function for which the Order was well equipped, having invested heavily in ships and their armaments, as well as paying for the human resource needed to man its galleys and ships-of-the-line.¹⁴³ Naval battles

¹³⁵ The earliest attribution of these paintings to Juan Morlete Ruiz was given by Blanch Lintorn-Simmons in *Description of the Governor's Palaces in Malta of Valletta, St Antonio and Verdala and Catalogue of the Pictures*, Malta, 1895, Cat. nos 59, 66 and 225.

¹³⁶ AOM 931 (38) No. 30, f.120v: Com.re Fra Ottavio Garcin (d.1781), '*Sei paesaggi vedute di marine*'; AOM 931 (36) No. 18, f.182: Comm. Fra Michele Frisari (d.1776), '*Sei altri quadri più piccioli con cornice dorati à mistura di porti e paesaggi*'.

¹³⁷ Schiavone, *I Tesori del Palazzo Magistrale*, Cat. nos 95, 96, 97: '*altro ad olio, oblong, alto palmo 1, largo palmi 2½, rappresentante Una marina, di autore ignoto [e due compagni del precedente]*', Cat nos 106, 107, 108: '*altro ad olio, oblong, alto palmo 1, largo palmi 2½, Marina, del Manglard*', '*...compagno del precedente ...*'; '*Una Tempesta, compagno ai sudetti*'.

¹³⁸ AOM 931 (31) 27, f.187v: Fra Vincenzo Pozzo (d.1688), '*un libro grande di carte geografiche*'.

¹³⁹ AOM 931 (39) No. 26, f.105v: Fra Capponi (d.1739), '*Un Mappamondo istorica*'.

¹⁴⁰ AOM 931 (29) No. 21, f. 106v: Fra Angelo Marone (d.1674), '*Cinque quatri di carta 3 paesi del mondi e l'altri due d'altri paesi*'; AOM 931 (30) No. 24, f.150: Fra Ignatio Diotallesi (d.1682), '*Quattro carte di geografia*'; AOM 931 (30) 29, f.166: Fra Arnaldo Valguarnera (d.1683), '*Nove carti geografi*'; AOM 931 (35) No. 16, f.110: Fra Ottavio Tancredi (d.1719) '*Una carta da navigare col suo compasso e bussola*'; AOM 931 (34) No. 25, f.216v: Fra Don Andrea Di Giovanni (d.Messina, 1715), '*Carte Geografiche a tilaro vecchio*' (the maps were sold at public auction in Messina to Placido Franchi for 20 tari); AOM 927, f.308: Fra Pier Marcello Cavaniglia (d.1771), '*Libri e carte marini*'; AOM 931 (37) No. 30, f.114: Fra Josephi Perelli (d.1768), '*Carte geografiche*'; Julia Toffolo, 'A Maltese Auction of 1779' in the Artefact Collection of Fra Giuseppe Raiberti; an unpublished manuscript in the Museum of the Order of St John, *Furniture History*, 25, 1989, 112: Fra Giuseppe Raiberti (1779), '*Sei carte geografiche*'.

¹⁴¹ AOM 931 (32) No. 27, f.239: Fra Lomellino '*Quattro carte cosmografiche del mondo*'.

¹⁴² AOM 931 (32) No. 20, f.174v: Fra Bartolommeo Diotallevi (d.1698) '*Quattro quadri rapp. li quattro parti del mondo*'.

¹⁴³ Dominic Cutajar and Carmel Cassar, 'Malta's Role in Mediterranean Affairs: 1530-1699', in *Malta: Studies of Its Heritage and History*, Malta, 1986, 105-140.

and land-based sieges held a particular significance to a collector's Hospitaller peers, or at least to those who were sufficiently well-informed on the Order's own history on land (the Siege of Rhodes, 1523 and the Siege of Malta, 1565), and at sea, in the Adriatic and Aegean seas (the Battle of Lepanto, 1571). Scenes of naval battles are the earliest known themes seen in the pictorial decoration of the Palace of the Grand Master, identified by visitors such as George Sandys (1578-1644) who remarked how the 'chamber where they sit in councell, is curiously painted with their fights by sea & by land, both forrein & defensive'.¹⁴⁴ The principal halls of the Palace were decorated with paintings in fresco, with episodes from the history of the Order of St John from its days in Jerusalem, by Leonello Spada (Fig. 135), culminating in the 1570s fresco cycle of the Great Siege of 1565 by Matteo Perez d'Aleccio. The Council chamber included an oil-on-canvas frieze depicting the Order's naval exploits, while the palace corridors were decorated with lunettes in oil on canvas depicting more naval victories (Fig. 136).

When listed in Hospitaller collections, paintings of battle scenes would form part of a series, suggesting that they would have been commissioned by the collector, or purchased *in toto* from another collection. The collection of paintings belonging to Fra Gio Battista Brancaccio included a series of siege battle scenes, namely the 'Assedio di S. Mauro, Assedio di Corone della Previsa, Assedio de I Casali di Turchi sacrileggiati da Cristiani and Assedio di S. Mauro, o Corone della Previsa, o Casali di Turchi'.¹⁴⁵ The Brancaccio collection also included other paintings depicting cavalry battles,¹⁴⁶ as well as naval battles.¹⁴⁷ Fra Pasqualino owned five paintings of naval battles fighting alongside Venetian galleys, and listed as 'L'Impresa dell'Armata Veneziana assieme con la squadra delle sette galere della nra Religione rappresentante la famosa vittoria che ottiene la squadra di portare in Malta otto galere e tre galeazze sotto il comando del fu re Em.mo Gran Maestro Carafa in tempo del suo generalato che fu alli 26 di Giugno 1656'.¹⁴⁸ Some listings of battle scenes are generic.¹⁴⁹ Other paintings of battle scenes, attributed to Borgognone, the studio of Giulio Romano and the Lombard school, were part of the magistral art collection.¹⁵⁰ One may also interpret the full-length Cain

¹⁴⁴ George Sandys, *A Relation of a Journey begin An:Dom: 1610*, vol. 4, London, 1621, 233.

¹⁴⁵ AOM 931 (31) No. 16, f.89v.

¹⁴⁶ AOM 931 (31) No. 16, f.118v: Fra Gio Battista Brancaccio, '*Diverse battaglie a cavallo, et a piedi con lontananza di paesi*'. This painting formed part of 136 works that were rented from the Rospigliosi collection in 1686.

¹⁴⁷ AOM 931 (31) No. 16, f.89v, f.90: '*Quattro quadri di Paesaggi e battaglie di Galere, e Vascelli*'.

¹⁴⁸ AOM 931 (28) No. 6, f.30. The length of the title suggests that it may have been inscribed in a cartouche on the paintings.

¹⁴⁹ AOM 931 (12) No. 5, f.17v: Fra René Voxel de Tertre (d.1666), '*six tableaux de batailles*'; AOM 931 (28) No. 21, f.127: Fra Gasparo Pappacoda (d.1671), '*Un quadro della presa del Vascello*'; AOM 931 (33) No. 12, f.92: Fra Antonio Rossi (d.1702), '*Una battaglia di buona mano*'; AOM 931 (4) No. 9, f.105v: Fr Dn Manuel Arias (1703), '*dos battalles pequenas*'; AOM 931 (39) No. 25, f.99v, Fra Nicola Sambiasi (d.1739), '*Quattro quadri di battaglia*'; AOM 927, f.230, Bali D. Andrea Minutolo (d.1747), '*Tre Bataglie*'.

¹⁵⁰ Cat. no. 104: '*Altro quadro ad olio (nel terzo rango) alto palmi 1½, largo palmi 2, Battaglia, del Borgognone*', Cat. no. 119: '*Altro ad olio, alto palmi 3, largo palmi 5 (sopra la porta), Una battaglia, della scuola lombarda*', Cat. no. 138: '*quadro ad olio, alto palmi 5, largo palmi 9, copia della Battaglia di Costantino, presso Giulio Romano*', Cat. no. 147: '*Altro ad olio, alto palmi 3, largo palmi 4½, Una battaglia, copia d' ignoto autore*'. The theme of violence may also be inferred from an unusual series of paintings, found in the collection of the Spanish knight, Fra D. Romualdo Simon de Pallaves (d.1704), that of thirteen 'very old and antique' paintings depicting

and Abel in the magistral art collection, in its portrayal of brutal violence as another representation of war.¹⁵¹

Other types of representations of war require further interpretation, such as the *quadro de Pintura del Triunfo de la Relixxion*, in the collection of Fra Bali Diego Veterano (d. before 1700). The title may have referred to the Order's victory in the Siege of Malta in 1565, or to the invincibility of the Order.¹⁵² The archetype of a triumphant figure with martial attributes was given wide visibility in Malta in the mural painting 'Allegory of the Triumph of the Order of St John' (1660-66) by Mattia Preti above the main door of the Conventual church. Such an allegory combined the figure of Religion with that of Fortitude, similar to another painting attributed to Pietro Testa (1612-1650) titled *Allegoria dell'Ordine di Malta* (Fig. 138) executed in Rome for Fra Priore Girolamo Altieri (d.1653).¹⁵³ Earlier allegorical images, of which the earliest may probably be that found amongst the allegorical figures framing the Great Siege frescoes in the magistral palace, place the figure of 'Religione' depicted with the peaceful attributes of the dove (symbol of the Holy Ghost), the key (to Heaven) and the book (the Bible, symbol of learning), close to the figure of Fortitude bearing martial attributes. A similar image can also be seen in the frontispiece illustration to Giacomo Bosio's *La Corona del Cavalier Gerosolimitano* (1588).¹⁵⁴ By 1602, with the publication of Bosio's *Dell'Istoria della Sacra Religione*, the allegorical figure of *Religione/Fortitudo* includes the attributes of Turkish slaves, at a lower register.¹⁵⁵ A number of collections also included an *Allegory of the Order*,¹⁵⁶ from which one painting by Francesco de Mura, has remained in the Palace of the Grand Master to this day (Fig. 137).¹⁵⁷

birds of prey; AOM 931 (4) No.11, f.145v: 'Trece quadros muy antiguos e viejos de los Iribos'. The collection of Bali D. Andrea Minutolo (d.1747) included an allegory titled 'Altro [quadro] Guerra, il tempo e l'amore' by the artist Tancredi; AOM 927, f.230.

¹⁵¹ Cat. no. 84: 'altro quadro ad olio, alto palmi 7½, largo palmi 6, *Caino ed Abele*, buona copia del Caravaggio'; also, Dominic Cutajar, *Museum of Fine Arts, Valletta, Malta: A commentary on its history and selected works*, Malta, 1991, 23. The painting is currently attributed to Giuseppe Vermiglio (1585-1635); John Gash, 'The Cain and Abel at the National Museum of Fine Arts: the case for Giuseppe Vermiglio', *Melita Historica* 12: 3, 1998, 267-80. A copy, that includes the coat-of-arms of an unknown Hospitaller knight, is found in a private collection in Malta.

¹⁵² AOM 931 (3) No. 26, f.242v.

¹⁵³ Silvia Bruno, *Allegoria dell'Ordine di Malta* catalogue entry in *Lungo il tragitto crociato della vita*, Venice, 2000, 4-8. The painting is in oil on canvas, 264 x 187 cm, and displayed in Palazzo Altieri, Rome. The collection includes items of furniture that show the Order's cross.

¹⁵⁴ Giacomo Bosio, *La Corona del Cavalier Gerosolimitano*, Rome, 1588.

¹⁵⁵ Bosio, *Dell'Istoria della Sacra Religione*, 2nd ed., 1602. Refer also to Derk Kinnane-Roelofsma, 'Britannia and Melita: Pseudomorphic Sisters', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute*, 59, 1996, 136.

¹⁵⁶ AOM 931 (28) No. 22, f.135: Prior Fr Giovanni Carpena Burló (d.1671), 'Un ritratto dell'Idea della Religione Gerosolimitana'; AOM 931 (4) No. 9, f.105: Fr Dn Manuel Arias (1703), 'Un quadro grande de la Relig. de S. Juan'; AOM 941 (4) No. 7, f.42: Fra Emanuele Tordesillas (d.1702), 'Un quadro Grande de la Relixion, con marco negro'; AOM 931 (5) No. 5, f.63: Fra Luis de Aledo (d. Murcia, 1718), 'Otro quadro con la efigia della Religione des.n Bal'. An *Allegory of the Order* also appeared in a list of paintings sent to Malta in 1631 by Fra Antoniotto Costa, to be displayed in the house in Valletta which the Costas inherited from Fra Ippolito Malaspina: A. Bertolotti, 'Esportazione di oggetti di belle arti da Roma nei secoli XVI, XVII e XVIII, parte II, in *Archivio Storico Artistico Archeologico e Letterario della città e provincia di Roma*, vol. iii, 1887, 45, quoted in Sciberras, *Baroque Painting in Malta*, 65.

¹⁵⁷ Cat. no. 118: 'Altro ad olio, alto palmi 5, largo palmi 6, rappresenta *Un'Eroina tenendo un emblema dell'Ordine, opera di Francesco de Mura*'; also in Lintorn-Simmons, cat. no. 64.

7.3.6 Historical and biblical scenes

Subjects from classical history listed in the inventories suggest that a collector's tastes were formed within the Roman tradition, and were sustained by classical texts. Often with an overt moral or political message, such paintings required a collector's informed choice of subject. Also, such paintings would have been executed by an artist who would have had some training in an artistic centre on mainland Italy. Their inclusion in a sizable collection would suggest that the collector would have sought out a work of notable artistic achievement, although artists' names are rarely listed in the inventories.¹⁵⁸

Biblical subjects would portray narratives related to heroism in the face of physical or psychological difficulty. A theme that appears in a number of instances is that of Judith and Holofernes.¹⁵⁹ The magistral collection included a painting by Mattia Preti, titled Judith with the head of Holofernes (Fig. 139).¹⁶⁰ Other biblical figures represented in Hospitaller art collections are David,¹⁶¹ Queen Zenobia and the Queen of Sheba,¹⁶² and Samson,¹⁶³ amongst others.¹⁶⁴

7.3.7 Humanist themes

The depth of learning of a handful of Hospitaller art collectors is indicated in the *spogli* through the inclusion of paintings depicting themes found in Renaissance and early modern literature, often drawn from antique texts or from medieval poetry. Some paintings also suggest a philosophical disposition by Hospitaller knights towards Neo-Stoicism, which offered practical advice on how to live in ways that were both morally sound and politically effective.¹⁶⁵ Stoic figures from antiquity, both male and female, were admired as secular versions of saints. Such

¹⁵⁸ Some subjects of history paintings in Hospitaller collections are '*Due quadri dell'incendio di Troia e delle Città di Pentapoli*', in the collection of Fra Antonio de Lucia (d.1667), and '*Alexander and Darius*', in the collection of Fra Minutolo: AOM 931 (28) No. 13, f.92v; AOM 927, f.230: '*altro [quadro] d'Alessandro e Dario morto*'.

¹⁵⁹ AOM 931 (28) No. 9, f.65: Fra Gio Mastrilli (1669), '*Una Giuditta e la Testa di Oloferne*'; AOM 931 (31) No. 29, f.194v: Balthasar d'Amico '*Giuditta col capo di Oloferne*'; AOM 931 (31) No. 16, f.119: Fra Gio Battista Brancaccio (d.1686), '*Judit con la testa di Oloferne*'; AOM 931 (33) No. 14, f.102: Fra Raymundi de Moncada (d. Messina, 1702), '*La Giuditta*'; AOM 931 (4) No. 20, f.288: Fra Don Felix Zapata (d.1708), '*una pintura grande de la hermosa Judit*'; AOM 927, f.230: Fra Bali D. Andrea Minutolo (d.1747), '*La Giuditta dimostra la testa di Oloferne*'.

¹⁶⁰ In 1956 the painting was transferred from the Palace to the Museum of Fine Arts.

¹⁶¹ AOM 931 (28) No. 22, f.135v, 137: Prior Fr Giovanni Carpena Burló (d.1671), '*Un quadretto di palmi un e mezzo e due del Giudizio di Davide*'; AOM 927, f.230: Fra Bali D. Andrea Minutolo (d.1747), '*Il Trionfo di Davide*'; AOM 931 (33) No.14, Fra Raymundi de Moncada (d. Messina, 1702), '*Davide*'; AOM 931 (39) No. 1, f.5: Fra Giuseppe de Nobili Cavire (d.1738), '*Davidde*'.

¹⁶² AOM 931 (33) No. 14, f.102: Fra Raymundi de Moncada (d. Messina, 1702), '*La Regina Sabba*'; AOM 931 (4) No. 9, f.105v: Fra Don Manuel Arias (1703): '*Un quadro de la Reina Zenovia con diverse figure*'.

¹⁶³ (28) No. 12, f.87v: Fra Gio Batta Gadaleta (d.1669), '*Sansone e Dalila*'; AOM 931 (34) No. 25, f.216v: Fra Andrea di Giovanni (d.Messina, 1715), '*Sansone mano di F. Mattia [Preti]*'; AOM 931 (39) No. 33, f.152: Fra D. Juan de Moncada (d. Palermo, 1734), '*Quattro quadri grandi ... altro [quadro] di Sansone*'.

¹⁶⁴ AOM 931 (13) No. 24, f.90: Fra Panisse Boisselet (d.1678), '*La Songe de Jacob*'; AOM 931 (33) No. 14, f.102: Fra Raymundi de Moncada (d. Messina, 1702), '*Moise nel fiume / Solomone che lucenta l'idoli / La Regina Sabba*'; AOM 931 (39) No. 33, f.152: Fra D. Juan de Moncada (d. Palermo, 1734), '*Quattro quadri grandi di mano di Boromans cioè uno di Lotto, altro di Sansone, altro della Susanna, ed altro di Rebecca, con cornice addorati* [sold for 40 scudi] / *L'istoria di Moise* [sold for 24 tari]'; AOM 927, f.230: Fra Bali D. Andrea Minutolo (d.1747), '*Giacobbe / Lo Svenimento di Esther*'.

¹⁶⁵ John T. Spike, '*La "Thomyris" de Mattia Preti: Une tragédie de la vengeance dans le goût de Sénèque*', *La Revue des musées de France, Revue du Louvre, Études*, 5, 2004, 57-62.

figures represented nobility, honour and resilience, themes appropriate to Hospitaller knights, who, in the name of the Faith, faced an ongoing life of hardship in sea battles, risking capture and possible death. Mattia Preti executed several pictures representing Stoic figures at their moment of trial, such as the Death of Lucretia (Fig. 140), the Death of Dido, and the Death of Cato, now found in various public and private collections.¹⁶⁶ Paintings of Lucretia appear in the collections of Carpane Burló,¹⁶⁷ and Di Giovanni,¹⁶⁸ and Fiteni,¹⁶⁹ while images of Sophonisba appear in the collection of Bichi.¹⁷⁰ Some paintings were executed to relatively large dimensions with full-length figures, suggesting their commission with the intention of displaying them in a large hall for public viewing. The Diogenes and Alexander and the Boethius and the Consolation of Philosophy which are listed in the *spoglio* of Fra Andrea di Giovanni, are some examples.¹⁷¹

The mention of portraits of philosophers in an inventory, also implies an erudite collector, presumably one versed in the respective philosophy. In seeking out such themes, a collector would be demonstrating his own moral philosophy, as well as his knowledge of classical texts. A collector's erudition also implies a comparable investment in developing aesthetic choices. The *spogli* reveal portraits of philosophers, some as a pair or in series, in several collections.¹⁷² Other elements within the *spoglio* of Fra Giovanni Filippo Marucelli (d.1776) indicate a connoisseurial approach to collecting with the mention of genre paintings with a northern provenance, namely 'Uno Fiammingho rappresentante una Bamboccia' and 'dipinti da Bernardo di Danimarca [a pupil of Rembrandt], che rappresentano per lo piu figure di poveri contadini'.¹⁷³ Two other *spogli* also mention subjects that suggest two similarly well-informed collectors: Minutolo owned a painting on the subject of Simon Magus,¹⁷⁴ while Carpane Burló

¹⁶⁶ Spike, *Preti: Catalogue raisonnée*, pp 446-7.

¹⁶⁷ AOM 931 (28) No. 22, f.135v, 137: Prior Fr Giovanni Carpane Burló (d.1671), 'Un [quadro] di Lucretia, di palmi 5 e 6'.

¹⁶⁸ AOM 931 (34) No. 25, f.214v: 'Lucretia Romana mano di Catalano il Vecchio [Antonio Catalano il Vecchio (1560-1605c.)]'

¹⁶⁹ AOM 931 (2) No. 7, f.23: 'Lucretia Romana'.

¹⁷⁰ AOM 931 (34) No. 23, f.168v: 'un quadro piccolo con la rapp. Quando Sofonisba doppo letta la letter domanda la Tzza del Veleno prima che andar prigione di [guerra], di nro 46'.

¹⁷¹ AOM 931 (34) No. 25, f.215v: Fra Andrea di Giovanni (d.1715), 'La Filosofia di Boethius Severino'.

¹⁷² Instances of portraits of philosophers are found in AOM 927, f.230: Fra Andrea Minutolo (d.1747), 'due filosofi, uno nosce te ipsam del matthia [preti], l'altro nomines quero del Barone di Micciche'; AOM 931 (28) No. 22, ff.135v, 137: Fra Giovanni Carpane Burló, '... Un quadro con una testa d'un filosofo / Un'a altro quadro con ritratto di Pico della Mirandola di palmi uno e mezzo e due, ... due quadretti uno con ritratto di Beatrice e Dante, ... un altro quadretto d'un ritratto di Pico della Mirandola'; AOM 931 (35) No. 19, f.143: Fra Don Silvio Sortino (d.1721), 'Quattro quadretti rapp. filosofi antichi'; AOM 931 (31) No. 10, f.59v: Fra Giovanni Alferi (d.Aquila, 1687), 'Eraclito, mezza figura / Democrito, mezza figura'; AOM 931 (31) No. 16, f.120v: Fra Giovanni Battista Brancaccio (d.1687), 'Cinque quadri d'ugual grandezza alti palmi 3¼, larghi palmi 2¾, che rappresentano cinque filosofi in mezza figura con loro cornice tutte dorate et intagliate alte ½ palmo in circa'. Ball Fra Giovanni Filippo Marucelli (d. Florence, 1769) owned a gold-mounted cameo of Socrates, AOM 928, f.46v: 'rappresentante la Testa di un Socrate'.

¹⁷³ AOM 928, f.46v.

¹⁷⁴ AOM 927, f.230: 'La Caduta di Simone Mago dell Abbe Solimen'.

owned a painting portraying Circe the Witch.¹⁷⁵ The palace art collection included three paintings of philosophers.¹⁷⁶

The names of characters from early renaissance literature occasionally appear as subjects of paintings, suggesting an unusual combination of both artistic and literary interests on the part of the Hospitaller collector. It is worth noting however that these collectors died in other lands, '*fuori convento*', suggesting that their pictorial choices may have been influenced by cultural sources distinct from Hospitaller Malta.¹⁷⁷ Other paintings on literary themes are suggested by the simple titles of '*Favola*',¹⁷⁸ as well as '*Baccanali*'.¹⁷⁹ On a comparable note, Fra Antoine Favray painted a cycle of paintings on the theme of Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*, which today are known to be in Maltese private collections.¹⁸⁰

Other allegorical subjects, not mentioned previously, can also be indicative of erudition on the part of Hospitaller collectors who could appreciate the significance of the pictorial device, and who could identify the attributes of the abstract concepts embodied in the human figure as portrayed. The title War, Time and Love implies an allegorical composition,¹⁸¹ as does the Effigy of Death.¹⁸² Comparable allegorical themes found in the *spogli* were The Four Seasons (Fig. 141),¹⁸³ as well as The Five Senses¹⁸⁴ as these too would have been depicted in allegorical form. A seventeenth-century allegorical painting, Truth uncovered by Time (Fig. 142),¹⁸⁵ and

¹⁷⁵ AOM 931 (28) No. 22, f.136: '*Circe maga - sopra tavola*'.

¹⁷⁶ Schiavone, *I Tesori del Palazzo Magistrale*, Cat. nos 74, 75, 115.

¹⁷⁷ Fra Don Raymundi de Moncada (d. Messina, 1702) owned a painting of '*Angelica and Medoro*', two characters in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (canto XIX, v. 36); AOM 931 (33) No. 14, f.102: '*Un quadro d'Angelica e Medoro*'. AOM 927, f.230: Fra Bali D. Andrea Minutolo (d.1747), '*Erminia / Il Giardino di Armida / Altro [quadro] grande di Dorinda e Silvio del Malinconico*'; the paintings represented figures from Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*, and Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido*. AOM 931 (28) No. 22, f.137: Fra Carpane Burlò '*Ritratto di Beatrice e Dante - sopra tavola*'. Fra Giovanni Alfieri (d. Aquila, 1687) owned a large painting of '*Daedalus and Icarus*', a mythological theme from Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, Book VIII; AOM 931 (31) No. 10, f.59. Fra Andrea di Giovanni (d. Messina, 1715) owned an '*Orpheus*', the Thracian poet in Ovid's '*Metamorphosis*'; AOM 931 (34) No. 25, f.215v: '*Orfeo con sua lira*'.

¹⁷⁸ AOM 931 (30) No. 24, f.150v: Fra Ignatio Diotellasi (d.1682), '*Due quadri di Favole*'. AOM 931 (39) No. 14, f.53: Fra Roberto Solaro d.1737), '*Un tondo con favola d'Europa / Altro simile con favola di Nettuno / un bacile grande con favola di Bacco / altro simile con favola della Fortuna*'.

¹⁷⁹ AOM 931 (34) No. 19, f.142v: Fra Constante Operti (d.Torino, 1712), '*due quadro per sopra porta: Baccanalli*'.

¹⁸⁰ Giovanni Bonello, 'Antoine Favray, the Man', in *Art in Malta: Discoveries and Recoveries*, Malta, 1999, 158-9.

¹⁸¹ AOM 927, f.230: Fra Bali D. Andrea Minutolo (d.1747), '*Altra Guerra, il Tempo e l'Amore, del Tancredi*'.

¹⁸² AOM 931 (3) No. 31, f.309: Fra Don Martin de Novar (d.1692), '*Un effigie della Morte*'.

¹⁸³ AOM 931 (13) No. 24, f.90: Fra Panisse Boisselet (d.1678), '*les quatre saisons de l'année*'; AOM 931 (40) No. 6, f.31: Fra Fabrizio Ruffo (d.1723), '*Le Quattro Stagioni dell'anno*'; AOM (39) No. 33, f.115v: Fra Juan Moncada (d.1734), '*Figure delle 4 Stagioni*'; AOM 931 (39) No. 1, f.5, Giuseppe de Nobili Cavire (d.1738), '*Li quattro stagione*'; AOM 927, f.230: Fra Bali D. Andrea Minutolo (d.1747), '*Quattro Stagioni di mano del Pittor Tancredi*'. The inventory of Fra Brancaccio (1687) includes a detailed description of four paintings on the theme of the four seasons denoted by seasonal fruit and flowers, that were leased as part of his residence from the Duke of Rospigliosi: '*Quattro stagioni: diverse cacciagioni, et una concha piena di pesci, 2do un bacile di limoni e cedri con un cesto di carciofi, 3.o diversi meloni con un bacile di confettura, 4.to due cesti di pomi, granati, cotogni, et una in tutte quattro sono vasi di fiori secondo la stagione, et una lontananza di paesi*'; AOM 931 (31) No. 16, f.118v. A series of four figures representing seasons formed part of the magistral collection, as listed in the 1826 inventory: Schiavone, *I Tesori del Palazzo Magistrale*, Cat. nos. 3, 4, 5 and 6, '*Quattro quadri ad olio, alti palmi 4, larghi palmi 3, rappresentanti le Quattro Stagioni - scuola napoletana*'.

¹⁸⁴ AOM 931 (31) No. 9, f.46: Fra Gulio Sortino (d.1686), '*Cinque pezzi di quadri consistenti nelli 5 sensi del corpo*'.

¹⁸⁵ Inv. No. 6281-2.

two eighteenth-century paintings, inscribed '*La Science*' (Fig. 143) and '*L'Industrie*' (Fig. 144) can still be found in the Palace of the Grand Master today.¹⁸⁶

7.3.8 *Portraiture*

Portraits in the Hospitaller art collections are highly suggestive of relationships between the collector and others: Portraits of Hospitaller knights and Grand Masters afford the best instances for studying the relationship between the sitter-patron and the artist, while portraits of other persons, whether royal, ducal, magistral or papal figures, or of family members or other hospitaller knights, serve to connote other relationships based on political or familial loyalties, as well as friendships.

The Grand Prior of France, Philippe de Bourbon, Duke of Vendôme (1655-1727) was a great patron of the arts, who had created a salon of artists and writers in Paris.¹⁸⁷ Earlier, he had befriended the French Academician Jean Raoux (1677-1734), when the latter was practising in Venice between 1707 and 1709.¹⁸⁸ Vendôme commissioned several paintings from Raoux, notably *The Four Ages of Man*,¹⁸⁹ (National Gallery), and he hosted the artist in his Paris residence, while giving him a pension.¹⁹⁰ Raoux's portrait of Vendôme was engraved by Laurent Cars and published with seventy other portraits of Grand Masters and other Hospitaller dignitaries in Vertôt's *Histoire des Chevaliers Hospitaliers* (Fig. 145).¹⁹¹ Another artist in the Parisian circle of Vendôme was Jan van Beecq (c.1638 - 1722). This may go some way to explain the presence of a painting of a *Ship of the Line* in the national art collection of Malta (Fig. 146).¹⁹² The Grand Prior's presence in the London court of Charles II in 1683, and his intimate relationship with Louise Kéroualle, Duchess of Portsmouth and royal mistress,¹⁹³ may explain the existence of another portrait found in the art collection of the Order, which was left behind in Malta at the departure of the knights in 1798, that is, the full-length portrait of the reclining figure of the Duchess (Fig. 147).¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁶ Inv. Nos. 8487-8 and 8487-9, respectively.

¹⁸⁷ A portrait of the Grand Prior is found in the collection of the Museum of St John in London, while another version is in the Musée Fabre in Montpellier. Information kindly forwarded verbally by John Gash. Philippe de Vendôme corresponded at length with the poet Jean Baptiste Rousseau. A collection of eighty letters from the Grand Prior to Rousseau are kept in the Paris, Bibl. Arsenal, MS7474, quoted in Henry A. Grubbs, 'The Vogue of Jean-Baptiste Rousseau', *PMLA*, 55: 1 (March 1940), 143 fn.22.

¹⁸⁸ E. Benezit, *Dictionnaire des peintres, sculpteurs, dessinateurs et graveurs*, France, 1976, 604-5.

¹⁸⁹ *La Vieillesse* by Jean Raoux was sold at auction by Christie's (Sale 6979/Lot 68, London 2004).

¹⁹⁰ Julia Toffolo, *Image of a Knight: Portrait Prints and Drawings of the Knights of St John in the Museum of the Order of St John*, London, 1988, 128.

¹⁹¹ Vertôt, *Histoire des Chevaliers Hospitaliers*, 4 vols, Paris, 1726.

¹⁹² Gary Schwartz, 'J. Van Beecq, Amsterdam marine painter, "the only one here [in France] who excels in this genre"', in *Les Echanges artistiques entre les anciens Pays-Bas et La France, 1482-1814*, ed. by G. Maes and J. Blanc, Belgium, 2010, 26-28.

¹⁹³ H. Forneron, 'Louise de Kéroualle, Duchesse de Portsmouth 1649-1734', *Revue Historique*, 29: 1, 1885, 21-74.

¹⁹⁴ The portrait is indicated in the earliest known inventory of paintings at the Palace of the Grand Master, drawn up in 1823, and is listed as 'No. 99. Altro [quadro] ad olio, alto palmi 4, largo palmi 6, *'Figura coricata con putti che la corteggiano'*, sembra essere ritratto di qualche donna distinta' (No. 99, another [painting] 4 palmi high, 6 palmi long, 'Reclining figure with courting putti', it appears to be a portrait of a distinguished woman); Schiavone, *I Tesori del Palazzo Magistrale*. The sitter is later named in another inventory published in 1895, listed

A portrait of Fra Gio Batta Spinola was listed as painted by Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659-1743), portraitist to French royalty and to members of the French court. Spinola also owned portraits of family members by other distinguished artists such as the Venetian, Antonio Molinari (1655-1704).¹⁹⁵ Spinola was one of the sons of the distinguished Genoese family, whose portraits were executed by masters such as Rubens as well as by Rigaud.

In Malta, Antoine Favray achieved fame as a portrait artist and executed several that are still to be seen in public and private collections.¹⁹⁶ His first commissions in Malta were for portraits of Maltese sitters, such as the painting Portrait of a Young Maltese Lady (Louvre). As court artist to the Grand Master, Favray executed full-length portraits of Pinto de Fonseca and of de Rohan (Fig. 148),¹⁹⁷ in oils on canvas as well as in pastel, establishing the prototype images that were replicated by his followers, and found in several private collections in Malta as well as in the national collection. His portraits of individual knights, such as the Bali de Schauenberg (Fig. 149) and Bali Jacques-Francois de Chambray, Grand Prior Giovenni Domenico Mainardi and Grand Prior (later Bishop) Bartolommeo Rull amongst several others, reveal a roll-call of high-ranking Hospitallers and Clerics. In 1744, Favray was called upon to execute a portrait of Pope Benedict XIV, based on the 1741 prototype executed by Pierre Subleyras.¹⁹⁸

Not all Hospitaller knights had strong enough connections to engage the interest of a famous artist, nor necessarily the means to pay for the services of one. Several portraits of knights were executed by other artists in Malta, whose names have still to be discovered. The existence of ineptly executed portraits in the national art collection of Malta suggests that the demand for portraits was high while the availability of talented, trained artists was not, at least, not in the seventeenth century.¹⁹⁹ Mattia Preti is known to have executed only one portrait in oils on canvas, other than that of Grand Master de Redin, in spite of having bottega assistants to help with his many commissions. Hospitaller portraits in a vernacular style may also be a subject to be studied in terms of 'local' attitudes to art and the notion of cultural marginalization

as 'No. 125. Portrait of the Duchess of Portsmouth – reclining; latter half seventeenth century'; Lintorn-Simmons, *Description of the Governor's Palaces in Malta*, 145. The portrait forms part of the national art collection of Malta. It is currently on display in San Anton Palace, Balzan.

¹⁹⁵ AOM 931 (39) No.36, f.180, Fra Gio Batta Spinola (d.1737): 'Il ritratto del celebre pittore Rigo / Ritratto pennello del Molinaretto'; A second version of the inventory includes a portrait of a relative of Fra Spinola, executed by another artist named Parodi; AOM 927, f.68: 'Il ritratto del Sig. Padre di Giovanetta Spinola pennello di Parodi'. Fra Spinola died in Malta and is buried inside St John's.

¹⁹⁶ Fiorentino and Degiorgio, *Antoine Favray*, 20-38.

¹⁹⁷ Ref Chapter III, on Favray's privileged access to de Rohan in order to execute his portrait.

¹⁹⁸ Favray may have worked from an engraving by Rocco Pozzi of the Subleyras portrait that is found at the Musée du Chateau, Versailles, Inv. No. M.V.3852; Fiorentino and Degiorgio, *Antoine Favray*, 33-34.

¹⁹⁹ On the enduring vogue for the mannerist style shown by the 'Maltese School of artists' until well into the mid-seventeenth century, refer to Mario Buhagiar, *The Iconography of the Maltese Islands 1400-1900*, Malta, 1988, 59.

engendered by the peripheral geographic locus of the Island in relation to artistic centres in Italy.²⁰⁰

7.3.8.1 Portraits of Popes, Cardinals and Monarchs

Portraits of popes and cardinals are frequently found in Hospitaller inventories. Such portraits may have served to emphasise the Hospitaller knight's personal family connections with the supreme head of the Order of St John or with cardinals in his court.²⁰¹ Other popes whose portraits are mentioned in Hospitaller inventories are Pius V (1566-1572),²⁰² Alexander VII (1655-1667),²⁰³ Clement X (1670-1676),²⁰⁴ Innocent XI (1676-1689),²⁰⁵ Innocent XII (1691-1700),²⁰⁶ Clement XI (1700-1721),²⁰⁷ Benedict XIV (1740-1758),²⁰⁸ as well as an equestrian portrait of Benedict XIII (1724-1730).²⁰⁹ The magistral collection, as catalogued in 1823, included portraits of Popes Benedict XIV (1740-1758), Clement XIV (1769-1774), and Pius VI (1775-1799).²¹⁰ The papal portraits found in the magistral collection may have been acquired as papal gifts, as well as through the dispersal of the respective knights' belongings.

Within the magistral collection, royal portraits were often the result of an exchange of gifts or a outcome of key events that linked a sovereign to the Order of St John. The magistral art collection included several royal portraits, depicting Philip IV, Louis XIV, Louis XV, Louis

²⁰⁰ British portraiture in the sixteenth century reflects a similar trend that has been argued in terms of England's 'cultural marginalization' from Italian artists that resulted from the Reformation, as well as owing to England's geographic distance from Italian artistic centres. This argument is discussed by Tatiana C. String in 'The Concept of 'Art' in Henrician England', *Art History*, 32: 2, April 2009, 290-306.

²⁰¹ AOM931 (31) No. 16, f.85v: Fra Gio Battista Brancaccio (d.1687), '*Papa Clemente X /... Card. Fran Maria Brancaccio / Card Stefano Brancaccio*'. All three paintings belonged to Brancaccio, and did not form part of the patrimonial collection that was returned to the Brancaccio heirs at his death. AOM931 (34) No. 4, f.30v: Fra Silvestro Grimaldi (d.1710), '*Ritratto dell'Em.mo Sigr Cardinal Grimaldi*'. In some instances the connection is less evident, as with the *Ritratto rapp.te il defunto Pontefice* [Clement XI (1700-21)] in the collection of Fra Don Silvio Sortino (d.1721), in Malta; Further research on the collector, who owned one of the larger art collections with over seventy pieces including sculptures, depicting mainly secular subjects, may reveal connections with Rome and its artists. AOM931 (35) No. 19, f.142v.

²⁰² AOM 931 (4) No. 10, f.129v: Fra Rocamora (d.1703), '*Un quadro de pintura griega con su marco dorado, y un retrato des Pio quinto de Papel*'.

²⁰³ AOM 931 (31) No. 16, f.121v: Fra Gio Batta Brancaccio (d.1686): '*Ritratto di Papa Alessandro VII ... Ritratto stampato in Vaso di Papa Alessandro Settimo*'; the portrait was leased from Prince Rospigliosi as part of the rental arrangements of Fra Brancaccio's residence. Also, AOM 931 (28) No. 6, f.32, Fra Cesare Lopez (d.1666), '*Papa Alessandro VII*'.

²⁰⁴ AOM 931 (34) No. 10, f.72: Bishop Fra Davide Cocco Palmeri (d.1711), '*Quattro ritratti con cornice di legno intagliate, et indorate, tre di Pontefici Innoc.o XI, Alessandro VII e Clemente XI*'.

²⁰⁵ AOM 931 (32), No. 33, f.282: Fra Giovanni Caravita (d.1699), '*Ritratto di Papa Innoc.o XI*'.

²⁰⁶ 931 (37) No. 16, f.65v: Fra Pio Francesco Gori, Rev. Com.re Cappellano Conventuale (d.1755), '*l'effigie del pontefice Innocentio XII. S.Gaetano ed An[toni]no*'.

²⁰⁷ AOM 931 (35) No. 16, f.110: Fra Ottavio Tancredi (d. 1719), '*Ritratto del Sommo Pontefice Regnante Clemente XI*'.

²⁰⁸ AOM 931 (36) No. 22, f.213v: Fra Francesco Pappalettera (d.1759), '*Ritratto della Sta mem.a di benedetto XIV*'. The papal portrait was bequeathed as a pair with a portrait of Cardinal Arguiglieres, to the *auberge* of the *langue* of Italy, on condition that they were to be displayed in the *Gran Sala* of the said *auberge*.

²⁰⁹ AOM 931 (37) No. 16, f.65v: Fra Pio Francesco Gori, Rev. Com.re Cappellano Conventuale (d.1755), '*Benedetto XIII a cavallo*'.

²¹⁰ Schiavone, *I Tesori del Palazzo Magistrale*, Cat. no. 72: '*Altro ad olio (situato sopra una porta) alto palmi 4, largo palmi 3, ritratto di Papa Lambertini*', Cat. no. 34: '*Altro ad olio, alto palmi 4, largo 3, ritratto in mezza figura di Papa Clemente XIV Ganganeli*', Cat. no. 195: '*Altro quadro ad olio, alto palmi 8, largo palmi 6, ritratto di S.S. Pio VI*'.

XVI (Fig. 150), Catherine Empress of Russia,²¹¹ as well as others depicting un-named Kings.²¹² The magistral art collection also included four equestrian paintings of sovereigns.²¹³ Within private collections royal portraits would lend themselves to a discussion on the collector's political allegiances to that Hospitaller knight's homeland. The Spanish knight, Fra Don Diego Veterano (c.1684) owned a small portrait of Charles V (1500-1558),²¹⁴ implying patriotic sentiments towards the Emperor who in 1530 presented Malta as a fiefdom to the Grand Master of the Order. Portraits of another Spanish monarch, Charles II (1661-1700) were listed in a number of inventories of the Spanish knights.²¹⁵ Other portraits of Spanish royalty were also found in other *spogli*, such as the thirteen half-length portraits of the Spanish royal family in the inventory of Fra Carlos Carroz y Castella (d.1701).²¹⁶ The 1759 inventory of Fra Francesco Pappalettera listed two portraits of the King and Queen of the Two Sicilies,²¹⁷ while the 1780 inventory of Fra Giuseppe Maria Cicinelli included portraits of members of the Bourbon dynasty, that is, of the King of the Two Sicilies and of King Louis XVI.²¹⁸

The *spogli* reveal a tendency of knights to own portraits of their homeland's sovereign or with whom they may have had some connection. Other portraits of rulers to be similarly found in

²¹¹ Schiavone, *I Tesori del Palazzo Magistrale*, Cat. no. 185: 'Altro quadro ad olio, stesse dimensioni [alto palmi 10, largo palmi 8] ritratto del Re di Spagna Filippo IV', Cat. no. 33: 'Altro ad olio, alto palmi 12, largo palmi 10, Ritratto di Luigi XIV in età giovanile, figura intera, opera della scuola francese sullo stile di Vanloo'. The painting has since been attributed to Jean-Francois de Troy. Cat. no. 43: 'Altro ad olio, alto palmi 6, largo palmi 4, ritratto di Luigi XV, mezza figura, della scuola francese'. The painting has since been attributed to Jan-Baptist van Loo. Cat. no. 38: 'Altro ad olio, alto palmi 12, largo palmi 9½, Ritratto di Luigi XVI, del Maestro di M. David'. The painting has since been attributed to Antoine Francois Callet, Cat. no. 45: 'Altro ad olio, alto palmi 10, largo palmi 7, L'Imperatrice Caterina II di Russia, scuola di Pompeo Battoni'. The painting has since been attributed to Dimitri Levitsky.

²¹² Schiavone, *I Tesori del Palazzo Magistrale*, Cat. no. 41: 'Altro ad olio, alto palmi 10, largo palmi 8, ritratto del Re di Spagna, di autore ignoto', Cat. no. 194: 'altro quadro ad olio, alto palmi 9, largo palmi 6½, ritratto di un altro Re di Spagna', Cat. no. 190: 'altro ad olio, alto palmi 8, largo palmi 6½, Un Re di Francia', Cat. no. 170: 'Altro ad olio, poco più grande dell'antecedente [alto palmi 7, largo palmi 5½], un Sovrano all'impiedi', Cat. no. 56: 'Quadro ad olio (sopra la porta), alto palmi 3, largo palmi 2, ritratto dell'Imperatore d'Austria, d'autore ignoto', Cat. no. 187: 'Quadro ad olio, alto palmi 8, largo palmi 6, ritratto di Un Imperatore d'Austria', Cat. no. 192: 'Altro ad olio, alto palmi 8, largo palmi 5½, altro ritratto di Un Imperatore d'Austria'.

²¹³ Schiavone, *I Tesori del Palazzo Magistrale*, Cat. no. 117: 'altro quadro ad olio, alto palmi 6, largo palmi 5 in circa, la sua tela in cattivo stato, rappresenta Un Sovrano a cavallo', Cat. no. 154: 'Altro quadro ad olio, alto palmi 10, largo palmi 7, ritratto di un Regnante a cavallo, di autore ignoto', Cat. no. 158: 'Altro quadro ad olio, alto palmi 7, largo palmi 5, rappresenta un Regnante a cavallo, pittura ridotta [in cattivo stato] come l'antecedente', Cat. no. 169: 'Altro quadro ad olio, alto palmi 7, largo palmi 5½, un Re di Spagna a cavallo'.

²¹⁴ AOM931 (3) No. 26, f.243: 'Otro pequeno tela caveza de Carlos quinto' (A small canvas painting of the bust of Charles V).

²¹⁵ AOM 931 (3) No. 25, f.238: Fra Galseran Vilalonga (d.1684), 'Un quadros ... La derasio del Reis'. The date of the inventory (1684) tallies with the reign of Charles II. AOM 931 (3) No. 31, f.309: Fra Don Martin de Novar (d.1692), 'Un Ritratto della Maestà Cattolica'. The date of the inventory (1692) tallies with the reign of Charles II. AOM 931 (4) No. 9, f.106v: Fra Don Manuel Arias (1703), 'Un Ritratto del Rey de cuerpo entero ... Dos Retratos de medio cuerpo del Rey y Reina ... Retrato de Carlos Segundo de cuerpo entero'. AOM 931 (31) No. 16, f.87v: Fra Gio Batta Brancaccio (d.1687), 'Un ritratto del Re' Carlo II'. In this instance the royal portrait was displayed next to a portrait of Cardinal Francesco Maria Brancaccio (1592-1675), his distinguished relative.

²¹⁶ AOM 931 (3) No. 42, f.376: 'trece quadros los siete de royes de medio cuerpo'. AOM 931 (4) No. 7: Fra Tordesillas (d.1702), 'Un Retrato della Regina Madre'. AOM 931 (34) No. 10, f.72: Fra Davide Cocco Palmeri (d.1711), 'Ritratto del Re Filippo V'. The royal portrait was one of a set of four that included three popes.

²¹⁷ AOM 931 (36) No. 22, f.213v: 'Lascio il Ritratto di Sua Maesta Re' delle due Sicilie parimente quello di Sua Maesta' Regina alli Sig.ri Com.re Fra Giuseppe e Fra Pietro Reitano alli quali creo per miei esecutori di questa mia ultima volontà'.

²¹⁸ AOM 931 (38) No. 31, f.137, 137v: 'Due quadri piccoli di due figure della casa di Francia, ... Stampa piccola del Re di Francia con cristallo davanti, ... Ritratto del Re delle due Sicilie'.

inventories of compatriot Hospitaller knights are those of Prince Ferdinand II of Tuscany,²¹⁹ Duke Vittorio Amadeo Prince of Piedmont (1666-1732) and his consort, Lady Cristina,²²⁰ the King of Hungary,²²¹ the King of Sardinia, Charles Emmanuel III,²²² the Grand Duke of Tuscany,²²³ and Peter Leopold Grand Duke of Tuscany,²²⁴ while a portrait in tapestry of a Russian sovereign, probably Catherine the Great, was listed in the *spoglio* of Bali Fra Michele Sagramoso (d.Naples, 1788).²²⁵ The tapestry may have been acquired during Sagramoso's role as diplomat on behalf of the Order in St Petersburg, having been sent there by Pinto in 1769.²²⁶

Royal portraits may also reveal aspects of a knight's engagement in the monarch's service, whether as diplomat, ambassador or admiral. Bali Jean Pierre Andre de Suffren (1729-1788), having served in the French navy since 1743, was made Vice-Admiral from 1781 onwards. Another Provençal knight Fra Jean Jacques de Verdellin (d.1673), displayed a portrait of Louis XIV in his Valletta palazzo.²²⁷ A comparable purpose linking the sitters with the history of the Order of St John in Malta may have led to the inclusion of the portraits of Don John of Austria, and of Philip IV of Spain, in the large art collection of the Italian Prior Carpena Burló (d.1671) in Malta.²²⁸ Similarly, the painting of King Louis IX the Saint, of France distributing alms in the magistral collection of Vasconcellos (d.1623) linked the Grand Master with royalty in the act of charity.²²⁹ The portrait of St Casimir of Poland (Fig. 151) another royal saint, was listed in the *spoglio* of the Italian knight Fra Silvio Sortino (d.1686),²³⁰ and that of the Aragonese knight, Fra Don Manuel Arias (1703).²³¹ A study on royal portraits in other Hospitaller collections, especially of deceased sitters, may establish other direct, yet less self-evident, connections between the collector and the sitter.

²¹⁹ AOM 931 (35) No. 10, f.76v: Fra Nicolo' Quaratesi (d.1720), '*L'Effigie del fu Serenissimo Principe Ferdinando Toscana ... Un altro ornamento simile per mettersi l'effigie della Serenissima Gran Principessa di Toscana Violante*'.

²²⁰ AOM 931 (31) No. 14, f.71: Fra Tommaso Cambiasi (d.1687), '*due altri [quadri] con i ritratti dell'Altezza di Savoia parm.te in carta*'; AOM 931 (34) No. 22, f.154: Fra Carlo Giuseppe Bertone de Balbis (d.Chieri, 1714), '*Due ritratti di Vittorio Amedeo, e di Mad.a Cristina*'.

²²¹ AOM 931 (43) No. 13, f.46: Fra Francesco Conte de Heissenslau (d.1688), '*Il ritratto del Re d'Hungaria et sua Eminenza*'. The description suggests a double portrait with the Grand Master of the time, Gregorio Carafa (1680-1690), though a historic connection is not known.

²²² AOM 931 (37) No. 12, f.49: Fra Carlo Costiole (d.1752), '*Ritratto della Maesta del Re di Sardegna*'; also AOM 927, f.204v. The date tallies with the reign of Charles Emmanuel III.

²²³ AOM 931 (37) No. 2, f.9: Fra Luca Tommasi (d.1766), '*Tre Ritratti delli Gran Duca di Toscana*'; also transcribed in AOM 927, f.306.

²²⁴ AOM 931 (37) No. 26, f.101v: Fra Bartolommeo Tommasi (d.1768), '*Il Ritratto di S.A.S. Gran Duca di Toscana Pietro Leopoldo Primo*'.

²²⁵ AOM 928, f.103: '*Ritratto in arazzo dell'Impradore della Russia*'.

²²⁶ Sire, *The Knights of Malta*, 188.

²²⁷ AOM 931 (12) No. 15, f.63: '*Un ritratto del Re di Francia*'. The absence of '*defunto*' indicates the reigning king of France at the time the inventory was drawn up.

²²⁸ AOM 931 (28) No.22, ff.135v, 137: '*Un [quadro] del Re della Spagna Filippo quarto / Un [quadro] del ... D. Giovanni d'Austria*'. Fra Carpena Burló's collection numbered over eighty paintings, mainly on religious themes.

²²⁹ AOM 924 'A' No. 3, f.30v: '*S. Luigi Re di Francia in atto di dar elemosina*'. The painting was bequeathed to the magistral estate. The Order shared a historical connection with Louis IX, in commissioning its own fleet to take part in the Seventh Crusade (1246) and assisting in the capture of Damietta; Sire, *The Knights of Malta*, 85.

²³⁰ AOM 931 (31) No. 9, f.45: '*S. Casimiro*'.

²³¹ AOM 931 (4) No. 9, f.106: '*Medio cuerpo del S.to Rey Casimiro con el mis*'.

7.3.8.2 Hospitaller portraits: Saints of the Order, Grands Masters and Knights

At the turn of the seventeenth century, efforts were made to standardise the figurative representation of the Saints and Blessed of the Order, through the publication by Giacomo Bosio of engravings of their portraits with attributes, in his book, *Le Imagini de' Beati, e Santi della Sacra Religione di S. Gio. Gerosolimitano*.²³² The prototypes and their subsequent copies have been discussed in Chapter III, though it may be pertinent at this point to discuss the pictorial typology of these portraits. All known portraits of the Order's saints and blessed, portray the sitters in religious attire. Hospitaller knights are depicted in the Order's black robes with the Order's white eight-pointed cross across their chest or on the left-hand side of a black cape, while the Hospitaller nuns are depicted wearing a nun's habit with a similar cape embellished with the eight-pointed cross of the Order (Fig. 152). The emphasis on the sombrely religious appearance of Hospitaller saints and blessed in their portraiture, may have influenced the dominantly similar appearance in portraits of Grand Masters in Malta, who were mostly portrayed in black magistral robes and headwear, rather than in suits of armour.

In portraiture, the eight-pointed cross was the determining attribute of membership in the Hospitaller Order of St John. The cross lent distinction to the figures of the sitters, who would stand out within group portraits. This is especially evident within history paintings, such as the fresco by Giulio Romano, in the Vatican *Stanze dell'Incendio* wherein the figures of Grand Master L'Isle Adam and his Knights are depicted guarding the Cardinals' Conclave,²³³ or the painting, *The Arrival of Maria de Medici in Marseille* (Fig. 153) one in the series on the life of Maria de Medici painted by Peter Paul Rubens depicting Fra Don Pedro Gonzales Mendoza, General of the Galleys of the Order of St John, who was responsible for leading the envoy with the bride of Henry IV to France.²³⁴ In Hospitaller portraits the eight-pointed cross would be shown on the sitter's cape, as jewellery hanging on a golden chain or on a knight's breastplate. The sitter's military identity would be indicated with the inclusion of armour, either worn as a breastplate, a full suit of armour, or simply a plumed helmet also indicating the sitter's noble lineage, supplemented by the depiction of the coat-of arms. If portrayed in battle, as in the posthumous portrait of Grand Master De Vallette by Favray,²³⁵ a Hospitaller knight would be

²³² Giacomo Bosio, *Le Imagini de' Beati, e Santi della Sacra Religione di S. Gio. Gerosolimitano. E di alter persone Illustri. Con un brevissimo compendio della Vita, e de' miracoli loro. Cavato dalla prima, e seconda parte dell'Istorie della medesima Sacra Religione*, Palermo, 1633.

²³³ The Grand Master was entrusted the duty of guarding the Conclave of Cardinals for the duration of the two months leading to the election of Pope Clement VII, formerly a Knight of St John; Elizabeth Schemerhorn, *Malta of the Knights*, New York, 1929, 50.

²³⁴ The knight was identified by Giovanni Bonello in 'Sebastian Zammet: Pimp and Banker to Henry IV', in *Histories of Malta Vol I: Deceptions and Perceptions*, Malta, 2000, 52-3. The painting is displayed in the Louvre.

²³⁵ The portrait was commissioned by the Langue of Provence and displayed in the Auberge. The portrait of 'Grand Master Jean de Vallette' was prominently displayed over the entrance to the Auberge de Provence during the 1765 bicentenary celebrations of the Knights' victory over the Ottoman Turks. Degiorgio and Fiorentino, *Antoine Favray*, 73. The authors quote an eighteenth-century traveller's description of these paintings: F.E. de Ste Priest, *Malte par un voyageur françois*, Part II, Malta, 1791, 88, 90. The portrait was removed to the magistral palace in the nineteenth century.

portrayed in a red surcoat with the white cross of the Order, worn over his suit of armour (Fig. 154). The eight-pointed cross was not exclusive to male Hospitaller knights. As a symbol of the Order, the eight-pointed cross was also worn by female monastic members of the Order, that is, those nuns who joined the monasteries of the Order of St John yet who did not see any active service, being obliged to live a relatively cloistered life as part of a religious community.²³⁶ Few portraits of Hospitaller nuns are known, however they were prominently portrayed with other Hospitaller knights as part of the decoration of the vaulted ceiling of the Conventual church by Mattia Preti.

Portraits of individual Hospitaller knights first appeared in churches, excluding the consideration of the Caoursin manuscript figures as portraits.²³⁷ Amongst the earliest portrait of a knight is one commissioned towards the late fifteenth century, portraying the kneeling knight Alberto Aringhieri in Hospitaller attire in the fresco painting inside a chapel in the Cathedral of Siena (Fig. 155); the painting was commissioned to commemorate his role as the Cathedral's clerk of works. In the early sixteenth century, the portrait effigy of Fra Luigi Tornabuoni (1442-1518) was sculpted in bas-relief on his tomb in the commandery church of San Giacomo in Campo Corbolino, Florence. In the first half of the sixteenth century, Fra Sabba da Castiglione was similarly portrayed in a fresco painting by Girolamo da Treviso (1508-1544) executed over his tomb, within the church of his commandery in Faenza which the Hospitaller knight had rehabilitated.²³⁸ Fra Sabba's portrait on the frontispiece to his book '*Ricordi*', may be seen to include the various attributes of Hospitaller knights given form in easel paintings: the eight-pointed cross, heraldic coats-of arms, suits of armour, books, and other religious artefacts such as rosary beads and crucifixes (Fig. 25).²³⁹ If the sitter formed part of the Order's religious cohort of chaplains, this would be indicated by the ecclesiastical costume, including the eight-pointed cross.

Grand Masters are known to have been portrayed in tapestries, first displayed in the magistral palace in Rhodes, and later inside the Conventual church in Valletta. The twenty-one portraits are only known from eye-witness accounts describing the Grand Masters 'arrayed in armour' giving the church a 'martial appearance'.²⁴⁰ As an archetype, magistral portraits of the Maltese period of the Order mainly show the Grand Masters in black robes within a secular setting. The paintings on display inside the Palace of the Grand Master show a seated figure, within a setting which includes attributes indicating the sitter's achievements. Examples are the portrait of Grand Master Nicolas Cotoner pointing towards a drawing of the fortifications that bear his name, or the portrait of Grand Master Caraffa, which includes a maritime background with ships

²³⁶ Silvia Evangelisti, 'Monastic Poverty, Material Culture in Early Modern Italian convents', *The Historical Journal*, 47: 1, March 2004, 1-20.

²³⁷ See Chapter III.

²³⁸ Refer to Chapter II.

²³⁹ See also Chapter III, 'Literary sources on Hospitaller art collecting'.

²⁴⁰ Kraus, *The Adventures of Count George Albert of Erbach*, 137-8.

of the Order in sail. Other portraits include minor attributes profiling the religious identity of the sitter, such as a crucifix with an ivory figure of Christ. Portraits of Grand Master Verdalle portray him in cardinal's robes, harnessing the implied message of his proximity to Papal authority. Other attributes in magistral portraits serve to indicate the sitter's nobility, such as the inclusion of a plumed helmet or a coat-of-arms.

Another 'element' in some magistral portraits is seen in the inclusion of young pages within the composition (Fig. 156). One page, or two, would be depicted to the side of a usually seated Grand Master. Their portrayal is comparable to that of young princes within a royal family portrait, depicted as part of Hospitaller hierarchy, yet standing in accompaniment (not in service) to the magistral sitter. The presence of a young page could have symbolized the Order's continuity, representing future Hospitaller knights.

Eighteenth-century portraits of ermine-robed sitters portray a majestic stance that together with the attribute of a closed crown shown to one side, indicate the Grand Master's status as prince. In her seminal work on Hospitaller portraiture, Julia Toffolo has captured the spirit of the latter-day portraits in her description of the portrait of Grand Master Pinto de Fonseca (Fig. 157): 'a powerful study of stature and strength, an icon of power and the realisation of that power, revealing perhaps more than any other work the way the Order felt about itself in the second half of the eighteenth century, and significantly, old-fashioned in its style'.²⁴¹

A handful of other portraits show the Grand Master in an anachronistic suit of armour, identifying the sitter as a military man harking back to the Order's glory of the Siege of Malta: this may have been plausible at the turn of the seventeenth century with Grand Master Wignacourt choosing to be depicted in a suit of armour which then still held a strong symbolic meaning amongst those veteran Hospitaller knights who had fought in the Siege and who were still alive. This is far less plausible in the 1798 portrait of Grand Master Ferdinand von Hompesch (Fig. 158), whose bearing belies the military stance, especially as he was better known for his skills as a diplomat around a negotiating table rather than on the battlefield.

While the archetypal portraits of Grand Masters were intended for display inside the magistral palace, where most of them can still be seen, a number of copies were made to be presented as gifts to the Conventual church and to other churches, as well as to the Order's embassies overseas, and to the *auberges* of the various *langues* of the Order, though the presence of such portraits would have served a double-purpose as a reminder of political authority. Other copies

²⁴¹ Toffolo, *Image of a Knight*, 9.

of the magistral portrait with a wide circulation would appear as engravings and prints.²⁴² Magistral portraits would have also served a further purpose after a Grand Master's death, in providing a 'model sitter' for respective funerary tombs. The funerary bust on de Redin's tomb in St John's Conventual church, bears a strong resemblance to the portrait of Grand Master de Redin by Mattia Preti, the only known magistral portrait in oils on canvas by Preti.²⁴³

Magistral portraits are mentioned in several Hospitaller inventories, sometimes even in a series.²⁴⁴ The Grand Master whose portrait appears to be mentioned most frequently in Hospitaller inventories is that of Grand Master Gregorio Carafa (1680-1690).²⁴⁵ Other magistral portraits included in the *spogli* are those of Grand Masters Verdalle,²⁴⁶ Alof de Wignacourt,²⁴⁷ Lascaris,²⁴⁸ Redin,²⁴⁹ Rafael and Nicolas Cotoner,²⁵⁰ Perellos,²⁵¹ Zondadari,²⁵² Vilhena,²⁵³ and Pinto.²⁵⁴ The palace art collection included several magistral portraits, although it would appear that not all Grand Masters were represented, as the 1823 inventory mentions only those of L'Isle Adam, De Vallette, Wignacourt, Redin, Cotoner, Despuig, Pinto, Rohan, Ximenes and Hompesch.²⁵⁵

²⁴² Toffolo, *Image of a Knight*, 10-11. Several series of Grand Masters' portraits were published, as single sheets as well as illustrations in books and their frontispieces.

²⁴³ John T. Spike has suggested that the painting may have been made for the use of the sculptor, citing the painting's Neapolitan provenance to support the hypothesis. Spike, *Preti: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings*, 126. Preti's only other known magistral portraits are in oil on stone depicting the two Cotoner brothers, Rafael and Nicolas, shown within an allegorical representation of the Order, on the wall over the entrance of St John's Conventual church.

²⁴⁴ ACM *Sentenze*, Vol. 5, f.62: Fra Pietro Vitges (d.1626), '*Otto quadri con effigie di diversi gran maestri*'. Three portraits of un-named Grand Masters were sold in Messina during the auction of the property of Fra Andrea di Giovanni (d.1715). The portraits were bought by Paolo Ricco for 12 tari each; AOM 931 (34) No. 25, f.216v. The Spanish knight, Fra Don Martin de Novar (d.1692), owned five magistral portraits, one each of Grand Masters Garzes, Nicolas Cotoner and Caraffa and two of Grand Master De Redin, all compatriots of the collector; AOM 931 (3) No.31, f.308: '*Cinque ritratti dell'Em.mi SS Gran Maestri cioe' dell'Emm.mo Garzes, Redin due, D. Nicolo Cotoner, et Em. Caraffa*'. Fra Pio Francesco Gori (d.1755) owned one painting, a *tondo*, which portrayed all the Grand Masters' portraits up to that of his contemporary, Emmanuel Pinto de Fonseca, as well as three portraits of Grand Masters Perellos, Zondadari and Pinto; AOM 931 (37) No. 16, f.65v: '*Tutti i Gran Maestri insino al Dominante*'.

²⁴⁵ AOM 931 (28) No. 6: Fra Gian Carlo Pasqualino, (d.1718) - four portraits; AOM 931 (32) No. 7: Fra Felippo del Balzo (d. 1694) - one portrait; AOM 931 (32) No. 20 f.174v: Fra Bartolommeo Diotallevi (d.1698) - one portrait; AOM 931 (4) No. 13 f.219v: Fra Juan de Villavicencio (d.1708) - one portrait; AOM 931 (32) No.33 f.282: Fra Giovanni Caravita (d.1699); AOM 931 (31) No. 9, f.46: Fra Gulio Sortino (d.1686) - one portrait; AOM 931 (32) No. 12, f.13: Fra Domenico Cleria (d.1695) - one portrait; AOM 931 (34) No. 10, f.72: Fra Davide Cocco Palmeri (d.1711) - one portrait; AOM 931 (31) No. 16, f.85, 89v: Fra Gio Batta Brancaccio (d.1686) - two portraits; AOM 931 (30) No. 24, f.150: Fra Ignatio Diotallesi (d. 1682) - one portrait.

²⁴⁶ ACM *Sentenze* Vol. 3, f.23v: Fra Orazio Mola (d.1615).

²⁴⁷ ACM *Sentenze* Vol. 5, f.1: Fra Giovanni Battista Aberrante (d.1626).

²⁴⁸ AOM 931 (31) No. 16, f.85, 89v: Fra Gio Batta Brancaccio (d.1686); AOM 931 (31) No. 30, f.200: Fra Guglielmo Buonamico (d.1696); AOM 931 (2) No. 15, f.65: Fra Michele Cortez (d.1672).

²⁴⁹ AOM 931 (3) No. 31, f.305v: Fra Don Martin Novar (d.1692).

²⁵⁰ AOM 931 (32) No. 12, f.13: Fra Domenico Cleria (d.1695); AOM 931 (28) No. 6, f.32: Fra Cesare Lopez (d.1666); AOM 931 (30) No. 20, f.120: Fra Joanni Carascone (d.1680); AOM 931 (34) No. 31, f.240: Fra Rutilio Sansedoni (d.1716).

²⁵¹ AOM 931 (34) No. 24, f.187: Fra Giuseppe Maria Marchese Marini (d.1712); AOM 931 (4) No. 11, f.145v: Fra Romualdo Simon de Pallaves (d.1704); AOM 931 (4) No. 22, f.305v: Fra Ettore Pinto de Miranda (d.1709).

²⁵² AOM 931 (35) No. 16, f.110: Fra Ottavio Tancredi (d.1719).

²⁵³ AOM 931 (39) No. 12, f.35v: Fra Alessandro Ballati (d.1735); AOM 931 (39) No. 25, f.99v: Fra Nicola Sambiasi (d.1739); AOM 931 (40) No. 1, f.31: Fra Fabrizio Ruffo (d.1723).

²⁵⁴ AOM 931 (36) No. 17, f.175v, Fra Francesco Caterino Nobili (d.1767).

²⁵⁵ Cat. nos 32, 37: '*L'Isle Adam*', Cat. no. 109: '*De Redin*', Cat. nos 31, 140: '*Cotoner*', (does not indicate whether Rafael or Nicolas), Cat. no. 191: '*Despuig*', Cat. nos 40, 148: '*Pinto de Fonseca*', Cat. no. 132: '*De Rohan*', Cat. nos 129, 133, 139, 156, 193: '*Ximenez*', Cat. no. 188: '*Hompesch*'.

A number of *spogli* include portraits of the Hospitaller collector himself. When considered within the context of the entire collection of works, the inclusion of such portraits can be suggestive of the impression that the collector wishes to convey about himself: the modest collection of the Italian knight Fra Gaetano Despuches included five paintings in all, of which four were portraits – two of his parents, one of his uncle and one of himself – and all were to be bequeathed through his *quinto* to his brother, Zualdario.²⁵⁶ This illustrates the strong familial bonds that underpinned the lives of Hospitaller knights' lives in Malta.

On the other hand, the collection of fifty-four paintings, of a variety of genres owned by Fra Fabrizio Ruffo (d.1723), amongst which were portraits of the Grand Master, a Cardinal and the Hospitaller knight himself, suggests that Ruffo's self-identity was fashioned in terms of rank and splendour. Similarity with just the mere five paintings listed in the *spoglio* of Fra Gio Batta Spinola (d.1737) the titles and attributions suffice to imply the splendour to which the Hospitaller knight had been accustomed from his birth, and maintained with his *palazzi* in Malta: four are portraits of Spinola family members, painted by such famed artists as the Frenchman, Hyacinthe Rigaud, the Venetian Antonio Molinari (1655-1704) and the Genoese Domenico Parodi (1672-1742), while the fifth painting, probably acquired in Malta, a St Mary Egyptian was executed by Mattia Preti. Spinola bequeathed the paintings back to his family.²⁵⁷

Hospitaller portraits would sometimes include a pictorial element or inscription which explains a commemorative purpose. Although inscriptions are not indicated in any of the inventories this can be seen in existing paintings: the portrait by Genevoli Sabbineso of the Landgrave Cardinal Friedrich of Hessen-Darmstadt (1616-1682) commemorated the young knight's promotion to Captain-General of the Galleys of the Order (Fig. 112), noted in the inscription '*Federico della Santa Chiesa Romana Cardinale Langravio di Asia Capitano Generale della Squadra di Malta L'anno 1644*',²⁵⁸ together with the depiction of the Order's galleys in the background to the portrait.²⁵⁹ Such inscriptions indicate the purpose for which the portrait would have been commissioned, and suggests that its original purpose may have been intended for public display within an *auberge* or commandery, rather than for the sitter's private collection. This may be difficult to confirm just by viewing a painting as sometimes an inscription would be added by a collector or dealer in later years, as happened with that on the Portrait of the Knight of Malta

²⁵⁶ AOM 931 (38) No. 12, f.41v; AOM 927, f.252-3: '*In oltre prego umilmente S.E. accio mi accordi la grazia di ritornare alli miei famigliari li Ritratti dei miei genitori zio e mio. E come che il quadro grande della Scesa della Croce e rincolato e devo tornarlo a qualcheduno dei miei parenti non avendo que' altri che mio fratelli il P. Zualdaro lo lascio a lui.*'

²⁵⁷ AOM 931 (39) No. 36, f.180; AOM 927, f.68.

²⁵⁸ Malcolm Barclay, Notes to the digital catalogue entry on a nineteenth-century copy of the Palace portrait in the Museum of St John, London, <http://www.nicepaintings.org/works/83094>.

²⁵⁹ The portrait was listed in the earliest known inventory of the art collection of the Palace, where it is displayed today. Cat. No. 184, in Schiavone, *I Tesori del Palazzo Magistrale*.

Fra Vincenzo Anastagi by El Greco (Frick Collection),²⁶⁰ or that of the Grand Cross Marbeuf in the national art collection of Malta,²⁶¹ that includes the inscription ‘*Noble Fr René Robert de Marbeuf Com.dr de la Feuillée, Elu G.d Hosp.r le 27 Janv.r 1746, et decédé en l’An De Dignité le 17 Juillet 1747*’. On a comparable note, a number of paintings still extant in public and private collections include the coat-of-arms of their original owner. One of the better known instances is the St Jerome by Caravaggio (Fig. 5) which includes the coat-of-arms of Fra Malaspina. Other examples are less identifiable and remain unknown, such as the bearer of the coat-of-arms depicted in the sixteenth-century Madonna of the Fleet by Antonello Riccio (Fig. 128) and the bearer of the coat-of-arms in the seventeenth-century copy of the magistral painting by Giuseppe Vermiglio, the ‘Cain and Abel’, in a private collection.²⁶²

It is worth remarking that few portraits are known to depict more than one Knight within the composition other than those magistral portraits including figures of pages to the Grand Master. This emphasises the solitary nature of a Hospitaller knight’s life, having renounced the right to marriage and a family life. A handful of exceptions are known, in the form of extant dual portraits representing both sitters as equals and suggesting a brotherly relationship. One of the older examples is the dual portrait depicting Grand Master Jean de Vallette and Andrea Doria, by an unknown Italian painter in a private collection.²⁶³

7.4 Summation: Masculinity, self-identity and art collecting

The above-mentioned pictorial themes of devotional images, landscape painting and portraiture are relatively straightforward subjects to be comprehended by any viewer, whether a knight or a lay person. As the more commonly found subjects in Hospitaller art inventories, such themes also held specific relevance to Hospitaller values. However some inventories reveal other themes - allegories, historical subjects, philosophers’ portraits and literary themes – which can be less easily understood or appreciated. Such themes demanded the attention of an erudite viewer who could recognise the depicted narrative, and who could also value its significance.

²⁶⁰ The Frick Collection, Accession No. 1913.1.68; the full-length portrait has been dated to El Greco’s years in Rome between 1571 and 1576, where he met the knight. The inscription, that was removed in the course of restoration has been translated from Italian as follows: ‘Fra Vincenzo Anastagi, after having been Governor of Città Vecchia of Malta and having commanded in the siege of that same island one of the two cavalry companies that were in it and command of other infantry companies and was sergeant-major of the Marca (?). He was honoured many times by the Grand Master with three commanderies and died in Malta, Captain of the Captain-galley, in 1586, his age being fifty five years’; Giovanni Bonello, ‘The Murder of El Greco’s Knight of Malta’ in *Histories of Malta III: Versions and Diversions*, Malta, 2002, 118.

²⁶¹ The portrait was executed by an unknown eighteenth-century artist in Malta and measures 214 x 152 cm. Inventory Number 8003-5. It was listed in the earliest known inventory of the art collection of the Palace Cat. No. 150, in Schiavone, *I Tesori del Palazzo Magistrale*.

²⁶² The ‘Battle of Lepanto’ was originally an altarpiece in the Sarria Church, and is now displayed at the National Maritime Museum, Malta.

²⁶³ The painting appears to be known only from photographs. It is illustrated in Giovanni Bonello, ‘The Palace Neptune: A portrait of Andrea Doria by Leone Leoni’, in *Art in Malta: Discoveries and Recoveries*, Malta, 1999, 17.

The presence of such paintings in Hospitaller collections, and the sophisticated social interaction which would have been fostered in the discussion of such themes, would seem to belie the commonly-held view of a community of men whose elite status and reputation was more readily established through the use of violence. Hospitaller art collections thus propose a vital expression of elitism and masculinity in contrast with such a point of view, something which may bear further exploration. In the mid-seventeenth century, Grand Master Lascaris had done little to encourage the perception of scholarly Hospitaller knights. He is credited with stating that 'my Order needs soldiers and sailors, not men with doctorates and other idle persons of which the island is full, to the great detriment of this principality'.²⁶⁴ Indeed, the portraits of some prominent Hospitaller knights defined their self-identity in terms of their heroic exploits, such as the naval victories that were gained in the course of the fleet's regular attacks on Turkish ships in the south and east Mediterranean, subjects that were depicted in naval battle scenes in the background of their respective portraits. Those Hospitaller knights who proved their prowess in naval engagements were considered to be heroic figures in various courts of Europe, where their portraits were widely available. Fra Lelio Brancaccio, who entered the Order in 1584, went on to become a military commander of repute and who also published several books on the art of war, was portrayed by Antony van Dyck (1599-1641), in a portrait which was replicated several times in engravings, up to the end of the seventeenth century.²⁶⁵ The thirty-one campaigns by Bali Jacques-François de Chambray (1687-1756) gave the French Hospitaller knight an international reputation: 'Europe was well acquainted with his shaggy overhanging eyebrows and long aggressive chin, freely displayed in print-shops, and even the English gazettes recounted his achievements'.²⁶⁶ Bali Pierre-Andre de Suffren Saint Tropez (1729-1788), who commanded the French fleet against Britain in the West Indies and in the Indian Ocean during the 1776-83 war as Vice-Admiral of France, held an ungainly appearance that is reflected in his portrait by Pompeo Batoni (Fig. 159).²⁶⁷ Several portrayals of the naval hero are known,²⁶⁸ and engravings of his portrait were also included amongst other illustrious French men and women in nineteenth-century publications.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁴ Frans Ciappara, *The Roman Inquisition in Enlightened Malta*, Malta, 2000, 95, quoted in Giovanni Bonello 'Patronage by the Knights of Malta' in *Chefs d'Oeuvres de l'Armeurie de Malte - Between the battlesword and the cross: Masterpieces from the Armoury of Malta*, ed. by V.A. Cremona and Oliver Renaudeau, Paris, 2008, 54.

²⁶⁵ Toffolo, *Image of a Knight*, 35-37.

²⁶⁶ Schemerhorn, *Malta of the Knights*, 254. Engravings of Bali Chambray continued to be published at the turn of the nineteenth century, until 1836; Toffolo, *Image of a Knight*, 50-1.

²⁶⁷ 'Le Bailli de Suffren, Amiral de France', oil on canvas, 133 x 96 cm, Inv. MV6744, displayed in the Palace of Versailles.

²⁶⁸ Suffren's portrait was painted by Roslin and his bust was sculpted by Houdon, the latter displayed in the Musée d'Aix en Provence; Toffolo, *Image of a Knight*, 53. Another portrait is found in the national art collection of Malta, Inv. No. 3777.

²⁶⁹ *Le Plutarque Francais, Vies des Homme et des Femmes Illustres de la France depuis le cinquieme Siecle jusqu'a nos jours* ...6 vols, Paris 1844, and *Les Marins illustres de La France*, Paris, 1846, quoted in Toffolo, *Image of a Knight*, 91.

Carmel Cassar has demonstrated how the prevalence of patterns of violent behaviour amongst knights was related to gendered concepts of honour and competition, in stark contrast with their designated religious role: 'violence was not simply an untamed overspill of latent aggression, but contained precise meanings and was governed by elaborate rules of play'.²⁷⁰ Yet, honour and status could also be established through the demonstration of erudition and sophistication as signified by individual works of art in a collection. Fra Sabba da Castiglione had exemplified the honoured status of military knight and erudite scholar in the sixteenth century. In the course of the eighteenth century, a number of knights succeeded in combining a military and a scholarly career, as shown by those knights with an interest in antiquity and in the natural sciences. One such Hospitaller knight was Fra Félicien de Monts de Savasse (1700-1768), who took a fine collection of antiquities with him, when he moved from Malta to Burgundy to the commandery of Laumusse, near Mâcon.²⁷¹ His collection included Egyptian and Roman statues as well as 47 bronze statues, Greek vases, Etruscan coins and intaglios which he gathered in the course of his sea travels in the Mediterranean when based in Malta as a young knight. In 1735, Savasse's collection was bought by the city of Lyons, although the knight continued to acquire other pieces, such as four statuettes of Mercury, Jupiter, Cybele and Tychee, which were engraved and reproduced in the book *Recueil d'Antiquités* by the Comte de Caylus.²⁷² Individual works of art also held the ability to single out a collector for his erudition and learning, implying autonomy of spirit and character, which may have held an affirming resonance in a community of men who valued physical strength over intellect.²⁷³ A Hospitaller art collection could thus fulfil a collector's nuanced expression of masculinity among his peers, as well as in relation to others.

Besides providing an alternative forum for the expression of rivalry, art collecting appears to have served in mediating relationships with women, as prescribed through the norms of early modern Hospitaller society. The Hospitaller inventories indicate that portraits of female family members - sisters and nieces - tend to be mentioned more than are portraits of male family members, leading to the consideration of such portraits as providing a surrogate female presence of distinction, which would be acceptable in a Hospitaller household. At a more intimate level,

²⁷⁰ Knights resorted to violence in groups as a form of territorial demarcation and to seal comradely friendships. Carmel Cassar, 'Monks of Honour: The Knights of Malta and Criminal Behaviour in Early Modern Rome', in *Exploring Cultural History: Essays in Honour of Peter Burke*, ed. by M. Calaresu, F. De Vivo and J.P. Rubies, forthcoming publication, 88. I thank Prof. Cassar for kindly giving me an advance copy of his essay.

²⁷¹ The information on Savasse is drawn from Claire Engel, *Image of a Knight: A Gallery of Portraits*, London, 1963, 138-147.

²⁷² At the end of the eighteenth century, the statues became the property of Richard Payne-Knight who later bequeathed them to the British Museum where they were displayed; Engel, *Image of a Knight*, 143. According to Engel, Savasse's collection did not accrue to the Order of Malta as the knight's 'financial situation [in the running of the Commandery of Laumusse] was found to be so involved that both his family and the Order of Malta repudiated his succession'. Engel also suggests that the statues may have been sold by Savasse's successor in Laumusse, Fra Gabriel de la Richardie, who needed to raise money to maintain the Commandery.

²⁷³ In a study on book-collecting among French knights of the Order, it has been indicated that there was hardly a market for books in Hospitaller Malta in the mid-eighteenth century; Depasquale, 'Books and Libraries', 93.

art collections which included religious paintings of the Virgin Mary and other female saints,²⁷⁴ and other portraits of women, as well as allegories traditionally portrayed in female form and other modes of figurative art displayed within a knight's residence made for the pictorial permanence of the female body gazed upon within an otherwise exclusively male-inhabited space.²⁷⁵ Although a number of paintings from the magistral palace would belie this, Hospitaller inventories rarely mention any overt instances of the nude figure.²⁷⁶ The latter would need to be inferred, although inconclusively so, from the listing of allegorical themes such as the four seasons (Fig. 141), or portraits of female hermit saints,²⁷⁷ biblical men and women or martyrdom scenes (Fig. 160),²⁷⁸ or themes taken from antiquity,²⁷⁹ or mythology (Fig. 161).²⁸⁰

²⁷⁴ AOM 931 (28) No. 6, f.32: Fra Cesare Lopez (d.1666), '*Due quadri ovati di Sante Vergini, uno S. Barbara l'altro S. Cecilia*'; AOM 931 (31) No. 9, f.46: Fra Gio Batta Sortino (d.1686), '*Sette quadretti di Sante Vergini con loro cornice negri di pero*'; AOM 931 (32) No. 3, f.26: Fra D. Andrea Marciano (d.1696), '*Quattro quadri con cornice dorate di Quattro Sante Vergini cioe' S. Apollonia, S. Lucia, Sta Caterina, e S. Agnese*'.

²⁷⁵ AOM 931 (29) No. 21 f.106v: Fra Angelo Marone (d.1674), '*Sei quatri di donzelli*'.

²⁷⁶ AOM 931 (28) No. 22, f.143v: Prior Fr Giovanni Carpena Burló (d.1671), '*Una donna mezza nuda in mezza figura vecchio sopra tavola*'; AOM 931 (31) No. 16, f.119v: Fra Gio Battista Brancaccio (1686), '*Un homo nudo a sedere in terra che pesca con una canna e parla con un altr' homo mezzo nudo, che sta in siedi vicino a lui appoggiato in un bastone, et ad un pilastro, dietro il qual' pilastro vi sono alcune verdure dove si vede la testa d'un altro homo*'; AOM 931 (38) No. 31, f.138: Fra Giuseppe Maria Cicinelli (d.1780), '*Arazzi grandi di Fiandra antichi con figure al naturale, due*'.

²⁷⁷ Examples of paintings of Mary Magdalen are found in: ACM *Sentenze* Vol. 6, f.100: Fra Ramon de Golon (d.1608), '*Un quadro della Maddalena*'; AOM 924 'A', f.30v: Grand Master Fra Luis Mendes de Vasconcellos (d.1623), '*S. Maria Maddalena in estasi*'; AOM 931 (28) No. 6, f.30: Fra Cesare Lopez (d.1666), '*Il Quadro della Maddalena*'; AOM 931 (28) No. 13, f.92: Fra Antonio de Lucia (d.1667), '*La Maddalena*'; AOM 931 (30) No. 24, f.150v: Fra Ignatio Dotallesi (d.1682), '*Una Maddalena*'; AOM 931 (31) No.9, f.46: Fra Giulio Sortino (d.1686), '*La Maddalena*'; AOM 931 (31) No. 14, f.71: Fra Tommaso Cambiasi (d.1687), '*La Maddalena*'; AOM 925 'B', f.3v: Grand Master Fra Don Gregorio Carafa, '*La Maddalena sopra car.. taccata a pastiglia*'; AOM 931 (32) No. 3, f.26: Fra Don Andrea Marciano (d.1696), '*La Maddalena*'; AOM 931 (4) No. 10, f.129: Fra Pietro Davalos Maca y Rocamora (d.1703), '*Una lamina de S.a Maria Madalena con guarnicion negra*'; AOM 927 f.111: Fra Fabrizio Visconti (d.1739), '*S. Maria Maddalena*'; AOM 931 (36) No. 8, f.114v: Fra Ferdinando Rosselmini (d.1778), '*La Maddalena*'; AOM 928 f.103, Fra Michele Sagramoso (d.Naples, 1788), '*La Madalena convertita*'. Examples of paintings of St Mary Egyptian are found in: AOM 931 (31) No. 16, ff.87v, 120, 122: Fra Gio Battista Brancaccio (1686), '*La testa della Maddalena piangente a capo di d.o letto / Santa Maria [M]adalen, che tiene una testa di morte in mano / Santa Maria Madalena, che contempla una testa di morte*'; AOM 931 (28) No. 22, f.143v: Prior Fr Giovanni Carpena Burló (d.1671), '*Egittiaia*'; AOM 931 (32) No. 28, f.252v: Fra Mattia Preti (d.1699), '*S. Maria Egiziaca*'; AOM 931 (39) No. 36, f.180: Fra Gio Batta Spinola (d.1737), '*Sa Maria Egiziana pennello del Cav. Mattias*'; AOM 931 (4) No. 27, f.388: Fra Ferdinando Contreras (d.1711), '*Santa Maria Maddalena Egittiaia, pittura originale del fu Cav. Preti*'; AOM 931 (38) No. 10, f.32v: Fra Guidotto Maria di Casamassimi (d. Bari, 1771), '*Sta Maria Egiziaca*'; AOM 931 (38) No. 31, f.129v, 136v, : Fra Giuseppe Maria Cicinelli (d. Naples 1780), '*S. Maria Egiziaca - nella Galleria / S. Maria Maddalena, di buona mano / Due quadri coll' Istoria di S. Maria Egiziaca / S. Maria Maddalena, penitente, di buona mano / S. Maria Egiziaca mezzo busto*'.

²⁷⁸ For example, the themes of '*Adam and Eve*', and '*Susanna and the Elders*', appear in the following inventories: AOM 931 (28) No. 22, f.143v: Prior Fr Giovanni Carpena Burló (d.1671), '*Adamo e Eva*'; AOM 931 (13) No. 24, f.90: Fra Joseph de Panisse Boisselet (d.1678), '*La Creation d'Adam / Quand [Adam] fut chasse' du paradis terrestre*'; AOM 931 (37) No. 16, f.65: Fra Pio Francesco Gori (d.1755), '*Un quadro in lungo con cornice intagliata in otto parti ove si vede Adamo, ed Eva dentro il Paradiso Terrestre*'; AOM 931 (38) No. 10, f.32v: Fra Guidotto Maria di Casamassimi (d. Bari, 1771), '*Susanna con li due Vecchi*'; AOM 931 (28) No. 22, f.143v: Prior Fr Giovanni Carpena Burló (d.1671), '*La Susanna*'; AOM 931 (31) No. 10, f.59: Fra Giovanni Alfieri (d.1687), '*La Susanna, mano di Luca Giordano*'; AOM 931 (34) No. 4, f.30v: Fra Silvestro Grimaldi (d.Naples, 1710), '*La Susanna*'; AOM 931 (39) No. 3, f.151v: Fra D. Juan Moncada (d. Palermo, 1734) '*Susanna, mano di Boromans*'.

²⁷⁹ ACM *Sentenze* Vol. 6, f.33: Fra Francois de la Menardie (d.1634), '*dodici quadri sibilli*'; AOM 931 (31) No. 10, f.59: Fra Giovanni Alfieri (d.1687), '*Cleopatra*'; AOM 931 (31) No. 29, f.194v: Fra Baltasar d'Amico (d.1689), '*Dieci quadretti piccioli di Vergini*'; AOM 931 (32) No. 21, f.181v: Fra Agostino Trivelli (d.1698), '*Una Cleopatra*'; AOM 931 (34) No. 4, f.27v: Fra Silvestro Grimaldi (d.Naples, 1710), '*Figure di tre vergine*'; AOM 931 (34) No. 25, f.214v: Fra Andrea Di Giovanni (d. Messina, 1715) '*Lucretia Romana mano di Catalano il Vecchio [Antonio Catalano il Vecchio (1560-1605c.)]*' AOM 927 f.230, Bali D. Andrea Minutolo (d.1747), '*Vergini antichi con cornici nere*'.

²⁸⁰ AOM 931 (28) No. 22, f.135v: Prior Fr Giovanni Carpena Burló (d.1671), '*L'Enere sopra tavola / Un Venere in piccolo*'; AOM 931 (31) No. 16, ff. 119v, 120: Fra Gio Battista Brancaccio (1686), '*Marte e Venere che pigliano amore alla rete / Apollo mezzo nudo con un'arpa in mano / Il mare, con Venere in un carro tirato da due delfini*'.

The even greater sparsity of titles that imply male nude figures leads to the consideration of such an absence in the light of the criminalisation of homosexual relationships, a theme that was even more covertly subsumed in art through representations of male martyr saints, such as St Sebastian.²⁸¹ At a more publicly interactive level, another form in which paintings enabled the articulation of relationships with women is seen in the bequests of paintings to women through the *quinto*. Fra Gio Batta Spinola bequeathed his family portraits to his nieces and in-laws, implying a quasi-patriarchal relationship with his chosen heirs.²⁸² Other bequests of paintings made to women, are mainly of religious or devotional subjects.²⁸³ Some *spogli* also name some women who owned painting(s), such as those who rented out lodgings together with furnishings, including paintings, to Hospitaller knights.

The visibility of an art collection could symbolically transmit other qualities of masculinity, such as the authority and power needed to be able to acquire rare or highly-sought pieces. Similarly, the display of portraits of influential figures interspersed with portraits of the collector or his immediate family, held connotations of personal influence and connections between the collector and the notable sitter. Portraits of influential family members, such as cardinals or dukes may have provided a similarly contested form of rivalry between the collector and his peers, while portraits of beatified or sainted ancestors added unrivalled lustre to a noble art collector.²⁸⁴ Male rivalry could perhaps most effectively have been expressed in terms of opulence and magnificence as displayed in the entirety of an art collection (Fig. 162), or by the inclusion of prized items such as tapestries.²⁸⁵ Thus art collecting provided a

conduce amorino, e quattro bitoni in torna al Carro / Mercurio in aria che parla ad una Donna ricoperta d'un man[fo] torchino la quale versa un liquore sopra d'homo morto a suoi piedi con due amorini attorno / Una mezza figura che rappresenta Iole, con la mazza d'Ercole in mano'; AOM 931 (39) No. 14, f.53; Fra Roberto Solaro (d.1737): 'Un tondo con favola d'Europa / Altro simile con favola di Nettuno / un bacile grande con favola di Bacco / altro simile con favola della Fortuna'; AOM 928 f.70: Fra Gaetano Bandinelli (d.1786), 'una statuetta di marmo rapp.te un piccolo Ercole'; AOM 928, f.43: Fra Silvio Vicentini (d.1787), 'La Venere dei Medici, statua che ho in segreteria'.

²⁸¹ AOM 931 (30) No. 24, f.150v: Fra Ignatio Diotallesi (d.1682), 'S. Sebastiano'; AOM 931 (28) No. 9, f.65: Fra Gio Mastrilli (d.1669), 'Un S. Sebastiano'; AOM 931 (28) No. 22, f.143: Fra Giovanni Carascone (d.1680), 'due statue uno di Sto Sebastiano'; AOM 931 (30) No. 20, f.126: Fra Joanni Carascone (d.1680), 'due statue uno di Sto Sebastiano'; AOM 931 (2) No. 37, f.169v: Fra Antonio de Sousa (d.1695), 'S. Sebastiano'; AOM 931 (32) No. 3, f.25: Fra Don Andrea Marciano (d.1696), 'S. Sebastiano'; AOM 931 (34) No. 25, f.214: Fra Andrea di Giovanni (d.1715), 'S. Sebastiano mano di ditto Barbalonga'; AOM 931 (35) No. 12, f.87v: Fra Andrea Platamone (d.1720), 'Quatri con immagini di Santi nro 5, di pal. Quattro e tre in circa con l'Immagine di San Sebastiano'; AOM 931 (5) No. 14, f.124: Fra Geronimo Ribas (d. 1720s), 'S. Sebastiano'.

²⁸² On the significance of specific contexts and status in relationships within the patriarchal model of manhood, ref Carmel Cassar, 'Monks of Honour', 87. I thank the author for kindly forwarding an advance copy.

²⁸³ AOM 931 (4) No. 7, f.42v: Fra Emanuele Tordesillas (d.1702), 'Una lamina del ... Sa.a con el nino en los Brazos del S. Marco entallado Dorado el qual se dio' pormanda ami' S.a D.a Maria Antonia de la larzar u Cunada'; AOM 931 (39) No. 18, f.73: Fra Priore Antonio Vaini (d.1737), 'alla Sig.ra Pincipessa D. Angela Vaini mia nipote un quadro di devozione da scegliersi dalla medesima sulla mia Eredità'. Vaini also bequeathed parts of his *quinto* to his sister Sig.ra Marchese Lucrezia Vaini Lanci, and to another niece, Sig.ra D. Girolama Lanci Altempis.

²⁸⁴ The inventory of paintings belonging to Fra Gio Battista Brancaccio (d.1687) included *Santi della sua famiglia*, although this may have also implied the family's patron saint; AOM 931 (31) No. 16, ff.89v, 90. The art collection enjoyed by Fra Andrea di Giovanni on loan from the patrimonial collection included a portrait of a thirteenth-century ancestor of the knight, 'La Beata Ippolita di Casa Giovanni', by the artist Antonio Alberti called il Barbalonga (1601-1649) AOM 931 (34) No. 25, f.214.

²⁸⁵ Tapestries are listed in the following *spogli*: AOM 931 (38) No. 31, f.138: Fra Giuseppe Maria Cicinelli (d.1780), 'Arazzi grandi di Fiandra antichi con figure al naturale, due' ('al naturale' may also signify 'life-size'); AOM 931 (43) No. 27, f.99: Fra Francesco Antonio Barone di Schonau, 'tapezeria di pelle stampata / tapezeria

powerful, if subversive, means of establishing a Knight's self-identity in nuanced forms of expressions of masculinity. Hospitaller knights found themselves on the peripheries of the normative patterns of manhood, owing to their vow of chastity (marriage and the generation of offspring were prohibited) and their vow of poverty (property, that in turn established status and autonomy, were prohibited). Those knights who did not, or could not, resort to violence other than on the battlefield, engaged in art collecting to establish other forms of expressing their masculinity and innate sense of rivalry. To the Hospitaller knight, art collecting may thus have provided one non-violent yet highly competitive arena where male honour and status were defined.

d'armesino rosso / tappezzeria di tela satinata rigata di diversi colori / Tre tele dipinte a guazzo attaccato al med.mo'; AOM 931 (30) No. 9, f.52v: Fra Agostino Morando (d.1679), *'quattro panni d'arazzo quali dice d.o Ill.mo Priore essere del Stato del Baliaggio / Nella seconda camera, dove dorme essor Ill.mo cinque altri pezzi d'arazzo che disse esser pure del Stato del Baliaggio'*; AOM 931 (2) No. 18, f.75v: Fra Melua, *'tappezzeria de Bosca ... Moneria'*; CAM Sentenze Vol.1a, No. 10, f.180: Fra Gio Paolo Corrado (d.1593), *'sette pezzi di tappezzaria guadamafili indorati compresi due piccoli'*.

VIII: CONCLUSION

The main thrust of this thesis has been to give impetus to the study of Hospitaller art collecting, by a discussion of the subject in its documentary manifestations, to be found in the archives of the Order of St John. As the research progressed, I found that the key to understanding the significance of Hospitaller art collecting lay in its geographic temporality. To a great extent, the Order shaped a society which was uncommon amongst European societies through its trans-regional presence across Europe and through its melding of an international corps of young noblemen into a religious and military organization operating at the periphery of Christendom. For these reasons, the norms and context of the Order of St John in Malta gave rise to an unusual model of art collecting, through practice and method specific to the Hospitaller art collector. This is what makes Hospitaller art collecting relevant to art historical research, and to the growing field of the history of collecting. Several observations, findings and suggested directions for further research have been presented in the course of the previous seven chapters. My research started by seeking to investigate how circumstances specific to the Order of St John influenced the nature of Hospitaller art collecting in early modern history. The conclusions which have been drawn, underscore the premise that the Order provides an unusual background with specific characteristics. A brief summary of the findings will serve to extend the additional findings which may be stated in this concluding chapter.

The Grand Masters of the Order were active players in the competing stakes of courtly art patronage and collecting, and not mere followers or imitators. Within the public scope of art patronage and collecting of the sixteenth century, Grand Masters of the Order could, and did, compete within the same arena as their sovereign counterparts in European courts. Although the means at their disposal were more modest, not least owing to the restricted availability of artists and artisans in Malta, they succeeded in harnessing the communicative power of the visual arts to consolidate their political authority with their peers and in order to engender stability within the Order.

The Hospitaller model of art collecting was significant not only to those knights who took religious and military vows, but also among a wider profile of art collector between the sixteenth and early seventeenth century. In recognition of the extraordinary status of Hospitaller knights, and in response to similar books for courtiers, a guidebook on appropriate behaviour was published including specific advice on the purposes of art collecting within the life of a Hospitaller knight. That this book was widely read, and not only by its intended readership, indicates that knowledge of Hospitaller life and practices was also relevant to early modern

society at large. More specifically, the knowledge of Hospitaller forms of art collecting was useful and relevant to the surrounding society, highlighting an added contribution by this thesis to the broader field of the history of art collecting.

Although one may speak of Hospitaller art collections, to a large extent, here, the term denotes the act of ownership of a number of works of art amongst which specific themes, discussed in Chapter VII, may be expected to be found. Contrary to earlier expectations at the start of this thesis, one finding is that the term 'Hospitaller' does not denote a characteristic or quality unique to the content of the assembled works, when compared to other European art collections, whether one looks at the choices that were made or collections' size or splendour. Rather, this research has unveiled a more significant finding, in that one should speak of the specifically Hospitaller *method* of art collecting which was extraordinary in its being determined by norms and regulations pertinent to a religious and military society, and not to any other European society. In embodying a model of art collecting which was uncommon in early modern Europe, Hospitaller art collections therefore provide a new channel for art historical research, especially in studies on art collecting by members of religious organizations and other early modern societies which were headed by elective leaders, such as the Papacy.

The findings have also confirmed the richness of information inherent to the archival inventories of the Order of St John. The study of the *dispropriamenti* has revealed a variety of observations ranging from the macro view, on the way the Order's regulations shaped the formulation and dispersal of Hospitaller art collections, to the micro view on the nature of the choice of the works of art that made up those collections. The archives have enabled an aggregate reading of parts of the inventories, which have been hand-picked in order to piece together a picture of the art collecting practices of Hospitaller knights, yet this is only a fragment of the broader cultural history of the Order in its early modern years. My reading of the archival documents acknowledges the partiality of the history that is thus presented. The history of art collecting which has thus been put together, may in future compete with other histories still embedded within the *spogli*, that is the history of clothing and jewellery, of furniture, of food and kitchen utensils, and other commodities and artefacts which once belonged to Hospitaller knights.

Another equally rich, and unexpected, finding is the strength of the correspondence between Hospitaller art collecting and the historical geography that has been mediated by these same archival inventories. Art history has mainly been engaged with the materiality of geographical studies, such as the fields of cartography and landscape painting, yet, as this thesis has tentatively explored, a much deeper exchange can take place in the common field of cultural geography. Conversely, the inventories offer further scope for research within the growing field

of imaginative geography and offer a new approach for historical geographers to engage with the materiality of art collections.

To conclude, this thesis proposes an extension to Rebecca Duclos' theory of 'collection as map' which encapsulates an art collector's imagined geographies,¹ with an observation on the collection of marks that a painting picks up in the course of its own history. The collector's mark, the royal cipher, the exhibition label, stamped on or fixed to the back of a canvas painting, are eloquent signifiers of that painting's changing meanings. In collectors' or curatorial language, such marks are a form of proof of the 'lineage' or 'pedigree' of a work of art, attesting to the value attached to the painting by different collectors and different museums. They are witnesses to the roads that a painting has travelled, and the changing contexts within which it has been gazed upon. As visual marks that map the significance of a work of art in collecting or curatorial terms, they too signpost the topography of the identity of the Hospitaller art collector.

¹ Rebecca Duclos, 'The cartographies of collecting' in S. Knell (ed.), *Museums and the Future of Collecting* (Ashgate, 1999) 84-102.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACM	Archives of the Cathedral of Mdina, Mdina, Malta
AOM	Archives of the Order of Malta
Attr.	Attributed to
C.	Century
Libr. Ms.	Library Manuscript
NMFA	National Museum of Fine Arts, Valletta, Malta
NLM	National Library of Malta, Valletta, Malta
NMM	National Maritime Museum Greenwich, UK
Not.A.M.	Notarial Archives of Malta, Valletta, Malta
n.p.	Not paginated
PCM	Private Collection, Malta
SJC	<i>St John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta, Malta</i>

APPENDIX A - GRAND MASTERS OF THE ORDER OF ST JOHN OF JERUSALEM, RHODES AND MALTA

Jerusalem

Gerard ('The Blessed')	c.1099 - 1120
Raymond du Puy	1120 - 1160
Auger de Balben	1160 - 1162
Arnaud de Comps	1163
Gilbert d' Assailly	1163 - 1170
Cast de Murols	1170 - 1172
Gerard Joubert of Syria	1173 - 1177
Roger de Moulins	1177 - 1187

Margat

Ermengard d' Asp	1188 - 1190
Geoffrey de Donjon	1193 - 1202
Alfonse of Portugal	1203 - 1206

Acre

Geoffrey le Rat	1206 - 1207
Garin de Montaigu	1207 - 1227
Bertrand de Thessy	1228 - 1230
Guerin Leburn	1231 - 1236
Bertrand de Comps	1236 - 1239
Pierre de VielleBride	1240 - 1242
Guillaume de Chateaufneuf	1242 - 1258
Hughues de Revel	1258 - 1277
Nicolas Lorgne	1277 - 1283

Acre & Cyprus

Jean de Villiers	1285 - 1293
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Cyprus

Odon de Pins	1294 - 1296
Guillaume de Villaret	1296 - 1304

Cyprus & Rhodes

Fulques de Villaret	1305 - 1319
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Rhodes

Helion de Villeneuve	1319 - 1346
Dieudonné de Gozon	1346 - 1353
Pierre de Corneillan	1353 - 1355
<i>Roger de Pins</i>	1355 - 1365
Raymond Berenger	1365 - 1374
Robert de Juilly	1374 - 1377
Jean Fernandez de Heredia	1377 - 1396

Italy

Riccardo Carraciolo	1396
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Rhodes

Philibert de Naillac	1396 - 1421
Antonio de Fluvia	1421 - 1437
Jean de Lastic	1437 - 1454
Jacques de Milly	1454 - 1461
Raimondo Zacosta	1461 - 1467
Giovan Battista Orsini	1467 - 1476
Pierre Cardinal d' Aubusson	1476 - 1503
Emery d' Amboise	1503 - 1512
Guy de Blanchefort	1512 - 1513
Fabrizio del Carreto	1513 - 1521

Rhodes and Malta

Philippe Villiers de l' Isle-Adam	1521 - 1534
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Malta

Pietrino del Ponte	1534 - 1535
Didier de Tholon Sainte Jalle	1535 - 1536
Juan de Homedes y Coscon	1536 - 1553
Claude de la Sengle	1553 - 1557
Jean Parisot de la Vallette	1557 - 1568
Pietro Giochi del Monte San Savino	1568 - 1572
Jean Levêque de la Cassière	1572 - 1581
Hughues Loubenx de Verdale	1582 - 1595
Martin Garzes	1595 - 1601
Alof de Wignacourt	1601 - 1622
Luis Mendez de Vasconcellos	1622 - 1623
Antoine de Paule	1623 - 1636
Juan de Lascaris - Castellar	1636 - 1657
Martin de Redin y Cruzat	1657 - 1660
Annet de Clermont de Chattes Gessan	1660
Rafael Cotoner y de Oleza	1660 - 1663
Nicolas Cotoner	1663 - 1680
Gregorio Carafa	1680 - 1690
Adrienne de Wignacourt	1690 - 1697
Ramon Perellos y Roccaful	1697 - 1720
Marcantonio Zondadari	1720 - 1722
Antonio Manoel de Vilhena	1722 - 1736
Ramon Despuig y Martinez de Marcilla	1736 - 1741
Manuel Pinto de Fonseca	1741 - 1773
Francisco Ximenes de Texada	1773 - 1775
Emmanuel de Rohan de Polduc	1775 - 1797
Ferdinand von Hompesch zu Bolheim	1797 - 1798

This list ends with the last Grand Master in Malta, and does not include later Grand Masters.

ILLUSTRATIONS



Fig. 1 The Headquarters of the Hospitaller Order in Jerusalem, Rhodes and Malta.



Fig. 2 Plan of Rhodes showing the *Collachio* area circled in red.

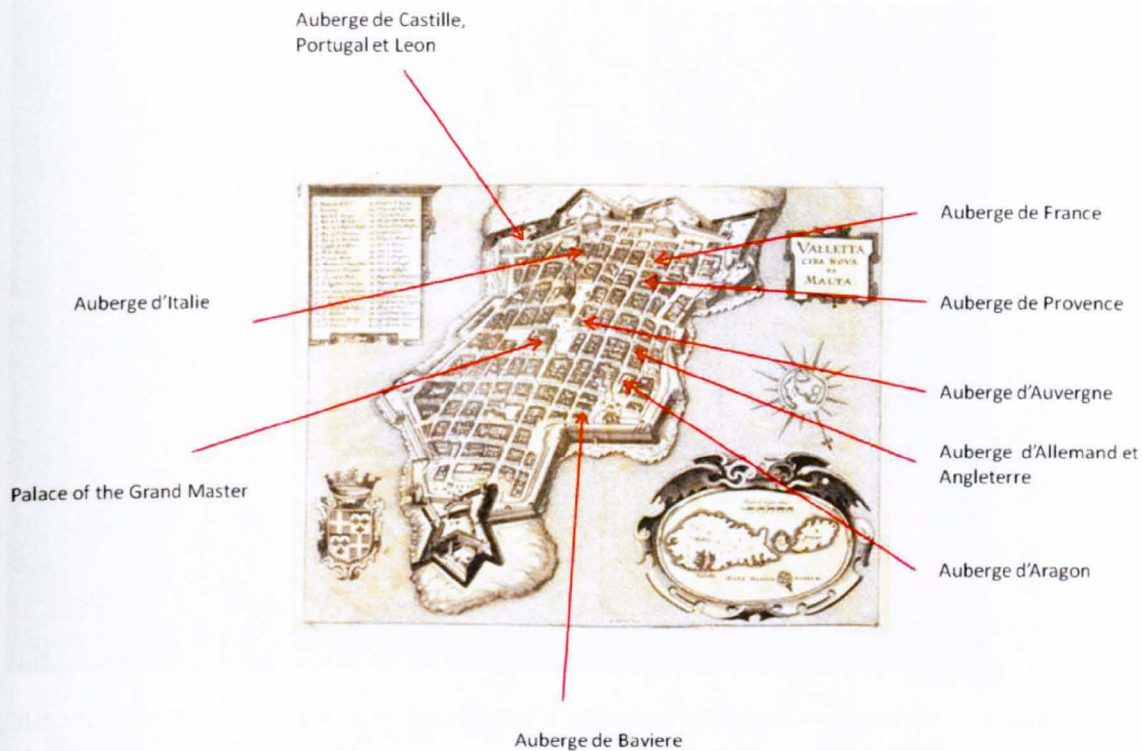


Fig. 3 Location of Magistral Palace and Auberges in Valletta. Francesco dell'Antella, *Chorographic View of Valletta*, 1602. Engraving published in Giacomo Bosio, *Dell'Istoria della Sacra Religione* (Rome, 1602).



Fig. 4 The distribution of commanderies of the Order of St John throughout Europe.



Fig. 5 Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *St Jerome*, 1607-8, Oil on canvas, 117 x 157 cm, SJC, Valletta.



Fig. 6 Anon., *Aerial view of Valletta and the Grand Harbour*, early eighteenth century. Oil on canvas, 128 x 208 cm, NMFA

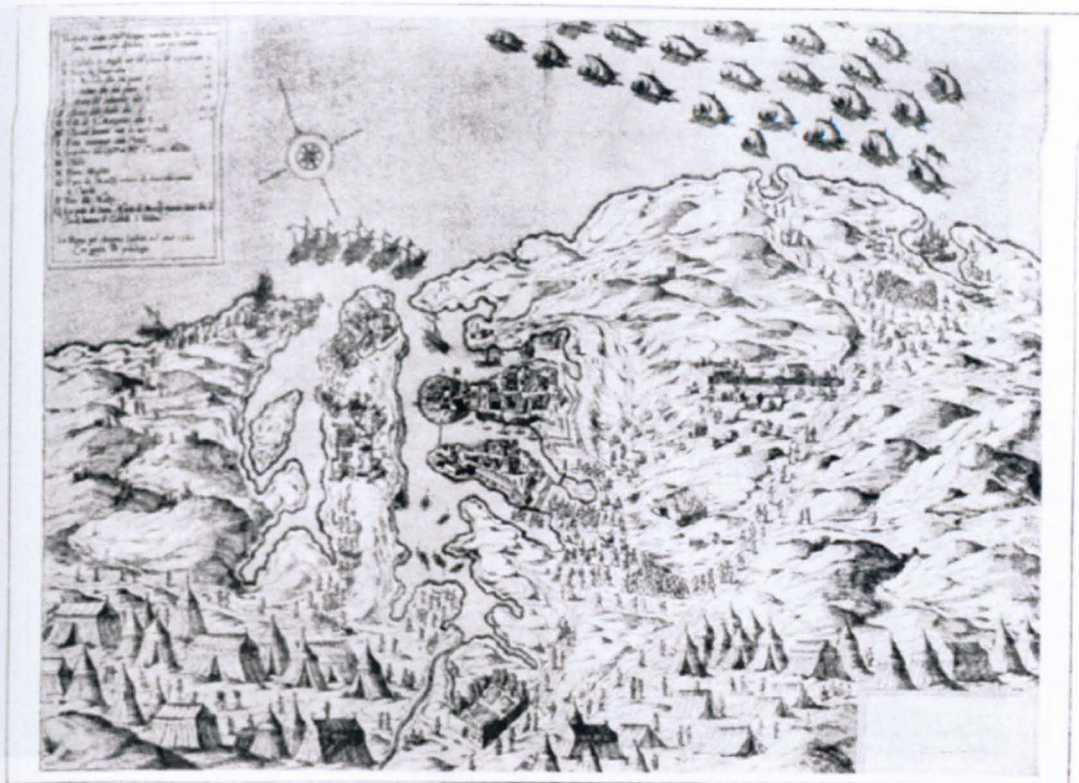


Fig. 7 Antonio Lafreri, *Ritratto dallo istesso disegno mandato da Malta dove sono annotate per alphabeto le cose piu notabile*, 1565. Engraving, 37.3 x 49cm, PCM.



Fig. 8 Matteo Perez d'Aleccio, *The Disembarkation of the Turks at Marsaxlokk Harbour* (second composition), c.1577. Fresco, The Grand Council Hall, The Palace, Valletta.



Fig. 9 The Grand Council Hall, The Palace, Valletta.



Fig. 10 After M. Perez d'Aleccio, *The Great Siege Fresco cycle*, c.1660. Oil on canvas, Chateau Luppé, La Cassagne, France



Fig. 11 M. Perez d'Aleccio, attr., *The Disembarkation of the Turks at Marsaxlokk Harbour, Modello for the Great Siege fresco cycle*, late sixteenth century. Oil on canvas, c.150 x 220 cm, NMM.



Fig. 12 Map of the route travelled by the Great Siege oil-on-canvas paintings, from Malta to Siena and London.



Fig. 13 Display of the painting *Siege and Bombardment of Saint Elmo, 27 May 1565* in The Queen's House, NMM.



Fig. 14 The interior of an eighteenth-century Maltese residence, Antoine Favray, *The Visit*, c.1750. Oil on canvas, 110 x 89 cm, NMFA.



DRAWING ROOM

Fig. 15 Charles F. de Brocktorff, *Drawing Room*, 1829. Watercolour and ink, 29.8 x 41.3 cm, Ponsonby Album, NLM.



Fig. 16 The Hall of eighteenth-century paintings and furniture, NMFA.



Fig. 17 The Ambassadors Hall, The Palace, Valletta.



Fig. 18 Duke Charles the Bold presiding a meeting from his throne, the knights of the order listening to a sermon by Guillaume Filastre. From *The History of the Order of the Golden Fleece*, Dijon (1473-1477). Codex 2948, Bibliotheque Municipale, Dijon, France.

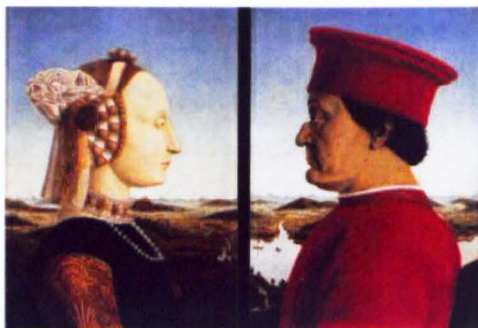


Fig. 19 Piero della Francesca, *Portraits of Federico da Montefeltro and His Wife Battista Sforza*. Tempera on panel, 47 x 33 cm (each), Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.



Fig. 20 Jan van Eyck, *The Virgin of Chancellor Rolin*, 1435. Wood, 66 x 62 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Fig. 21 The long gallery at the Palace of Fontainebleau, France.

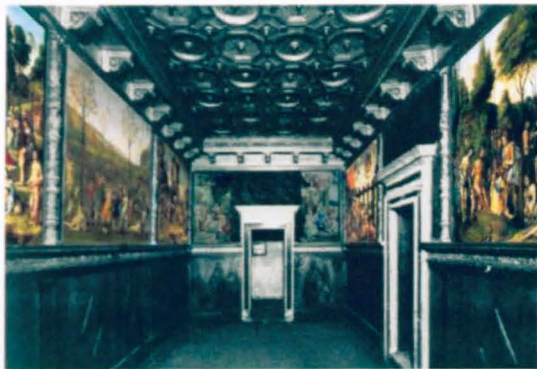


Fig. 22 The *Studiolo* of Isabella d'Este with a photo-montage of the paintings that originally adorned it.



Fig. 23 The *Studiolo* of Federico da Montefeltro, 1470.



Fig. 24 David Teniers the Younger, *Archduke Leopold Wilhelm of Austria in his Gallery*, 1651. Oil on canvas, 96 x 129 cm, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels.



Fig. 25 Frontispiece, *Ricordi di Monsignor Sabba da Castiglione*, Venice, 1560. NLM.



Fig. 26 Girolamo da Treviso, *Madonna con bambino, Santi e Fra Sabba*. Fresco, Church of the Commandery of Faenza.

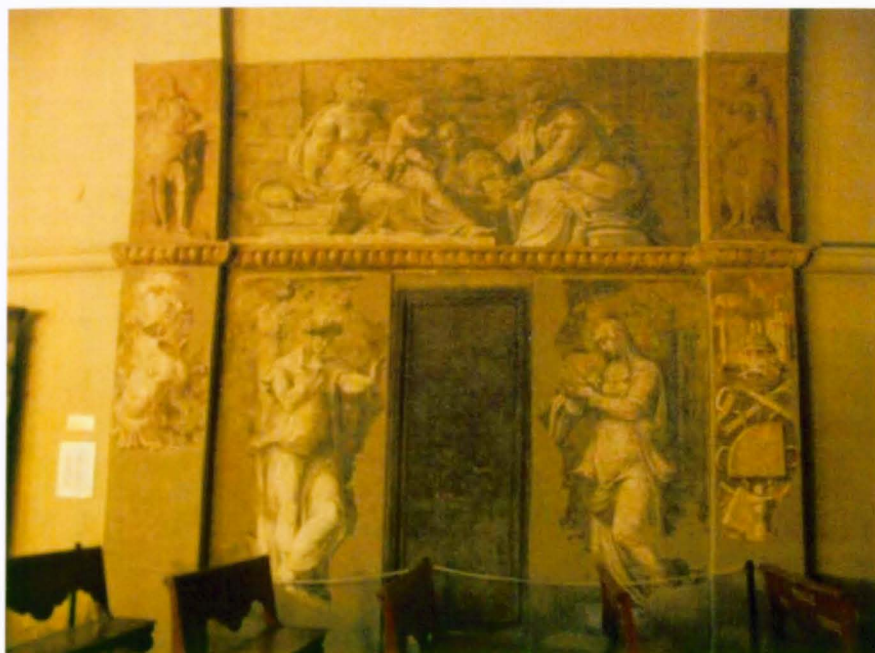


Fig. 27 Francesco Menzocchi. *Fresco around the tomb of Fra Sabba da Castiglione*, c.1547. Fresco, Church of the Commandery of Faenza.



Fig. 28 Anon., *San Giovannino*, sixteenth century. Carrara marble, 41 x 31 x 18.5 cm, Church of St Mary Magdalen, Faenza.



Fig. 29 Alfonso Lombardi, *St Jerome*, early sixteenth century. Patinated terracotta, Faenza.

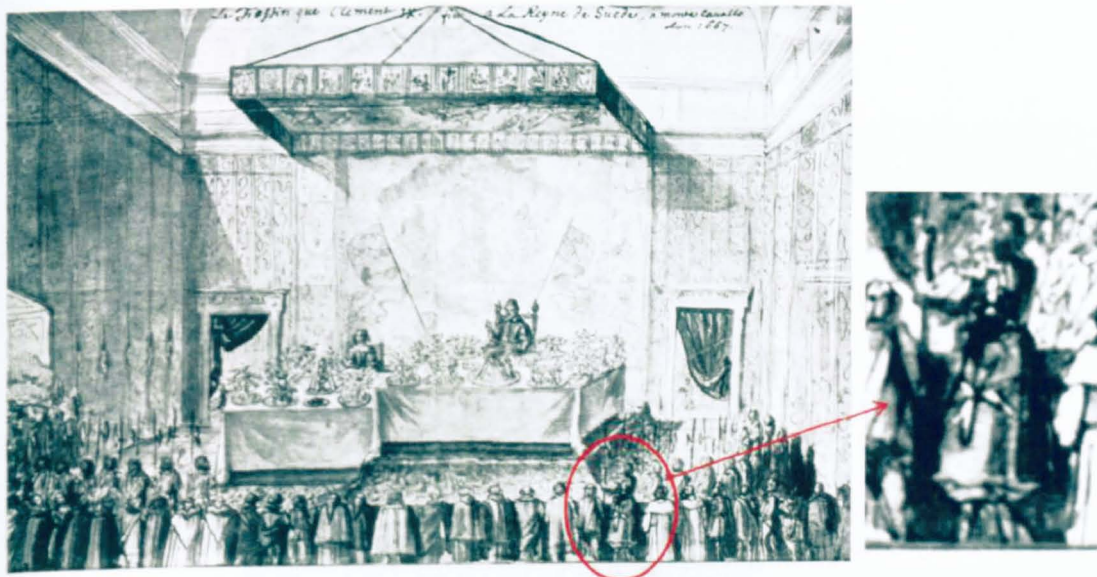


Fig. 30 Pierre Paul Sevin, *Queen Christina dining with Pope Clement IX*, 1668. Detail, right, showing the Ambassador of the Order of St John. Drawing, 24.8 x 36.7cm, Stockholm.



Fig. 31 Leone Leoni, attr., *Neptune/Andrea Doria*, sixteenth century. Bronze, c. 200 cm, The Palace, Valletta.



Fig. 32 Dimitri Levitsky, *Portrait of Catherine the Great*, 1787. Oil on canvas, 220 x 175 cm, The Palace, Valletta.



Fig. 33 Carlo Maratta, *Madonna and Child and St John the Baptist*. Oil on canvas, 170 x 134 cm, NMFA.



Fig. 34 *The Damascene Madonna*. The Greek Orthodox Church, Valletta.



Fig. 35 *The Eleimonitria*. Tempera on panel, The Greek Orthodox Church, Valletta.



Fig. 36 *The Madonna of Philermos*. St Peter's Monastery, Cetinje, Montenegro.

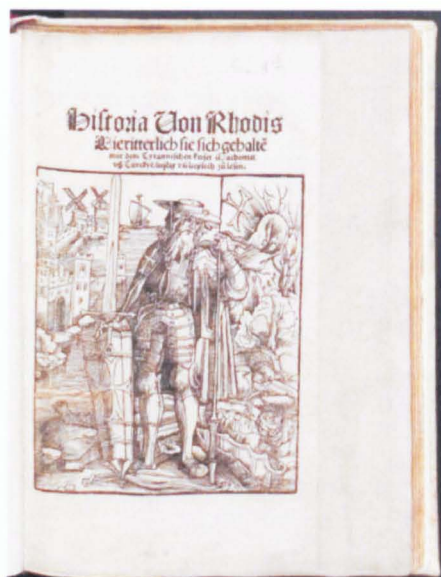


Fig. 37 Titlepage, *Obsidionis Rhodiae urbis descriptio*, by Guillaume Caoursin (Ulm, 1496).



Fig. 38 Master of the Cardinal of Bourbon, *The author dedicating his book to Pierre d'Aubusson, Grand Master of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem*, from 'A History of the Siege of Rhodes', by Guillaume Caoursin, 1483. Vellum, Lat. Ms 6067 f.3v, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.



Fig. 39 *Arrival of Grand Master Aumery d'Amboise in Rhodes with a relief naval squadron in September 1504, before 1512. Museu Textil i d'Idumentaria, Barcelona.*



Fig. 40 Antoine Favray, *L'Isle Adam's possesso of Mdina*, mid-eighteenth century. Oil on canvas, The Palace, Valletta.



Fig. 41 *The Palace at the time of Grand Master Zondadari (1720-1722) and the cuccagna*. Oil on canvas, PCM.



Fig. 42 Matteo Perez d'Aleccio, *The Baptism of Christ*, Museum of St John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta, Malta.



Fig. 43 *Portrait of Grand Master Hugues de Loubenx Verdalle (1582-1595)*, late 16th century. Oil on canvas, NMFA.



Fig. 44 Filippo Paladini, *The Life of the Baptist*, c.1588. Frescoes, former summer chapel, The Palace, Valletta.

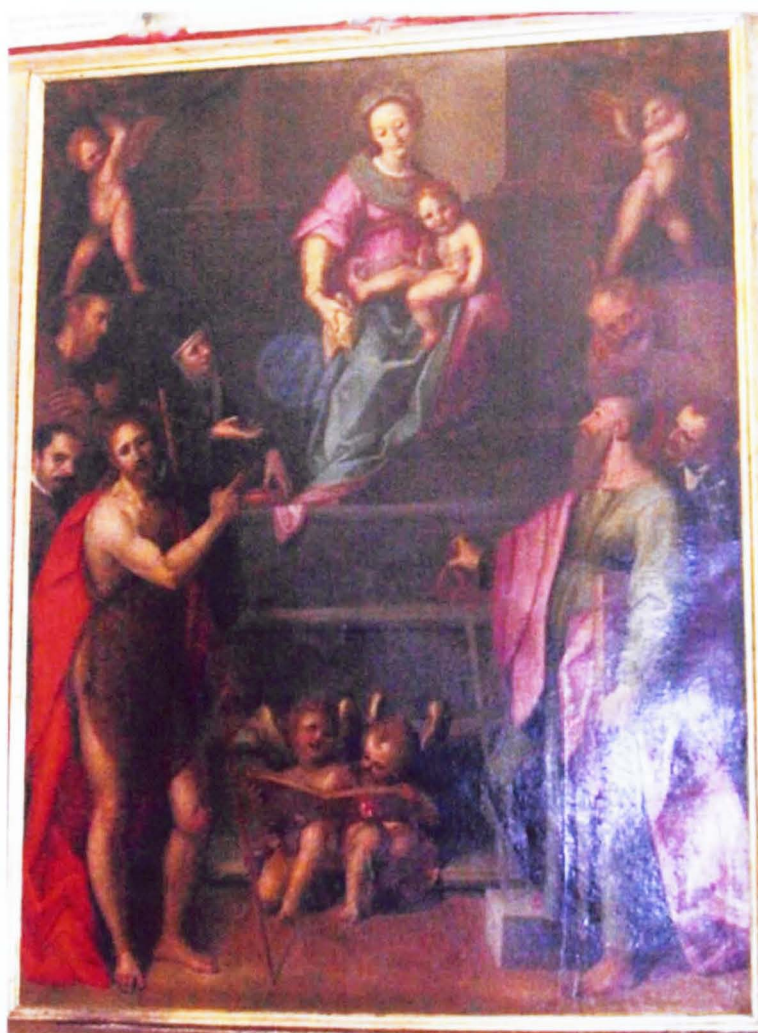


Fig. 45 Filippo Paladini, *Our Lady with St John and Paul, and Knights*. Oil on canvas, Palace of the Archbishop, Valletta.



Fig. 46 Verdala Palace, Boschetto, Malta.



Fig. 47 Biographical murals depicting the life of Verdalle from Grand Master's page to Grand Master. Fresco, Verdala Palace, Boschetto.



Fig. 48 Biographical murals depicting the life of Verdalle from Grand Master's page to Grand Master. Fresco, Verdala Palace, Boschetto.



Fig. 49 Illustration of Verdalle's Statuta (1588) showing an episode from Verdalle's life, as depicted in the Verdala Palace murals.



Fig. 50 Frontispiece to Bosio's *Le Imagini* ..., 1633. NLM.



Fig. 51 The iconography of St Ubaldesca, from *Le Imagini* ..., 1636, showing the new and old version of the saint's iconography.



Fig. 52 Anon., *Blessed Raymond du Puy*, early seventeenth century. Oil on canvas, SJC / Engraving in Bosio's *Le Imagini*.



Fig. 53 The Oratory of the *Decollatio*, and the altarpiece, *The Beheading of the Baptist*, by Caravaggio. The Oratory was re-designed by Mattia Preti in the 1680s.

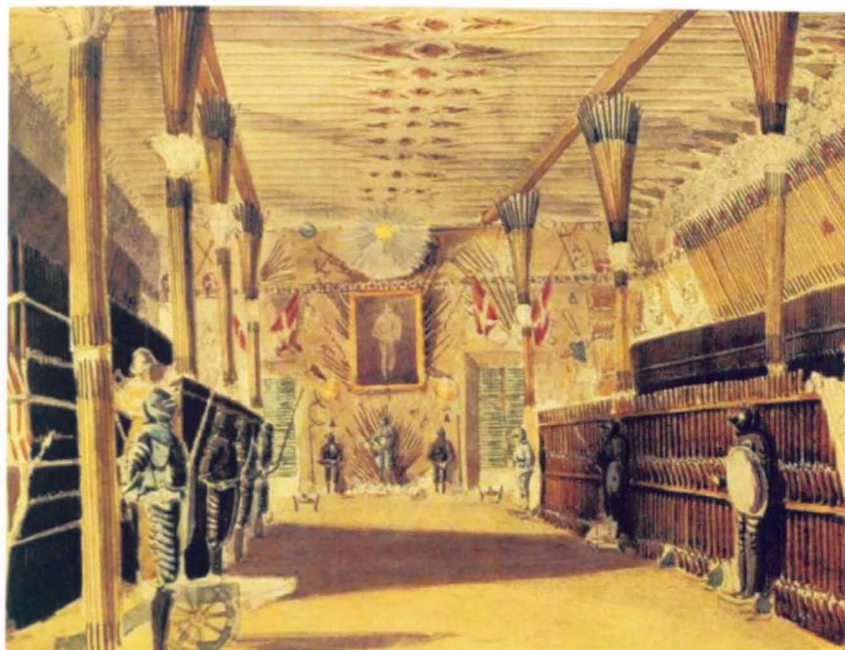


Fig. 54 Owen Stanley, *The Palace Armoury*, 1831. Watercolour, National Library of Australia. The painting shows the portrait of Wignacourt (see below) surrounded by trophies of war.



Fig. 55 Anon., *Portrait of Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt*, early seventeenth century. Oil on canvas, 262 x 182 cm, NMFA.



Fig. 56 Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Portrait of Alof de Wignacourt with a Page*, 1608. Oil on canvas, 194 x 134 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

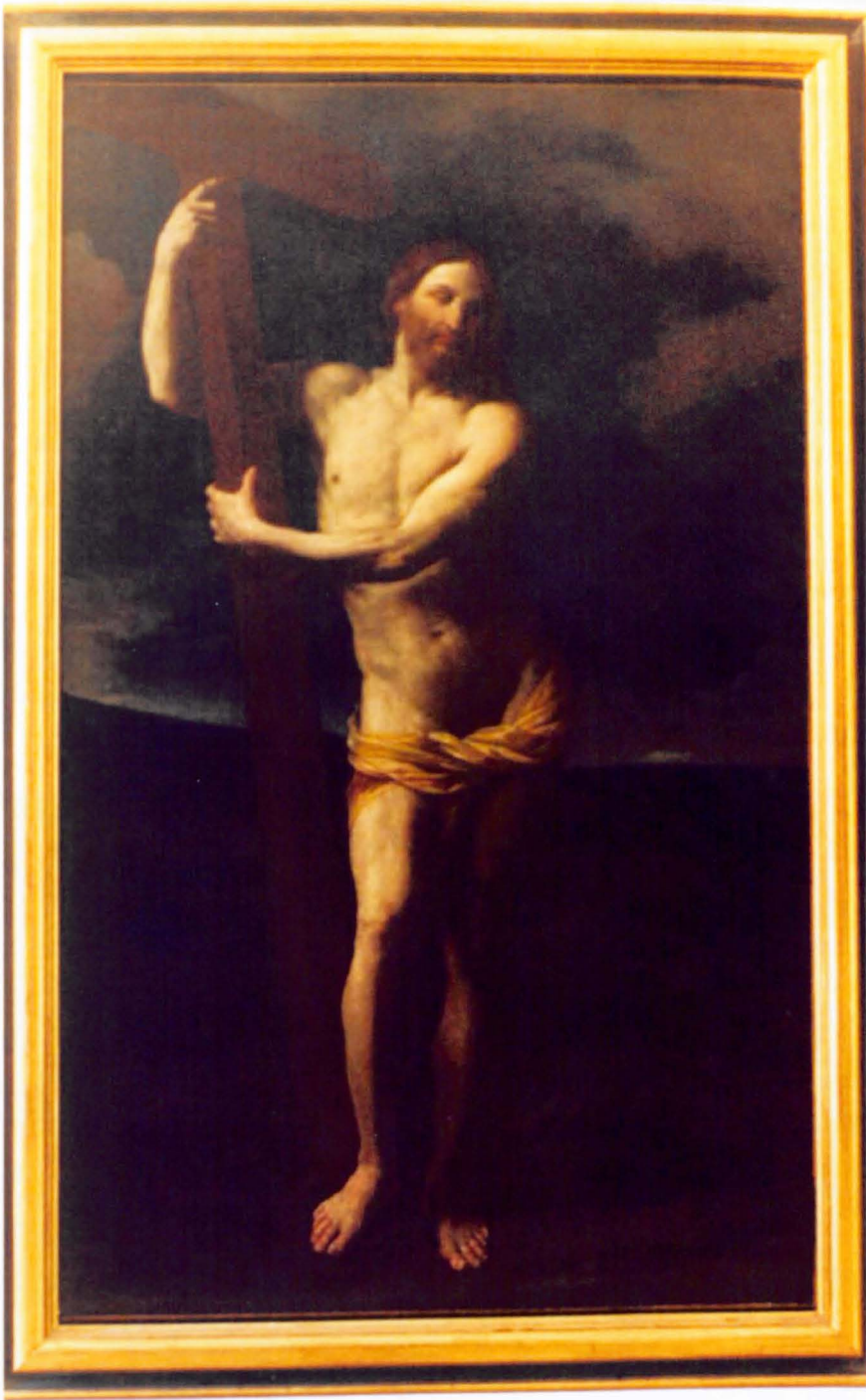


Fig. 57 Guido Reni, *The Risen Christ*, c.1620. Oil on canvas, 260 x 169 cm, NMFA.



Fig. 58 The *Teinture des Indes* tapestries in the Council Chamber, the Palace, Valletta.



Fig. 59 Frieze of oil-on-canvas paintings on the theme of the *Acts of Mercy*, around the walls of the former magistral bedroom.



Fig. 60 Detail of frieze, *Esuriens Pascere*, before 1720. Oil on canvas, The Palace, Valletta.

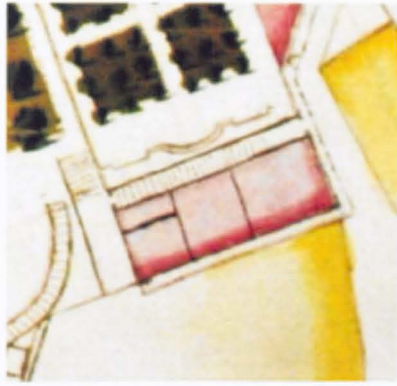
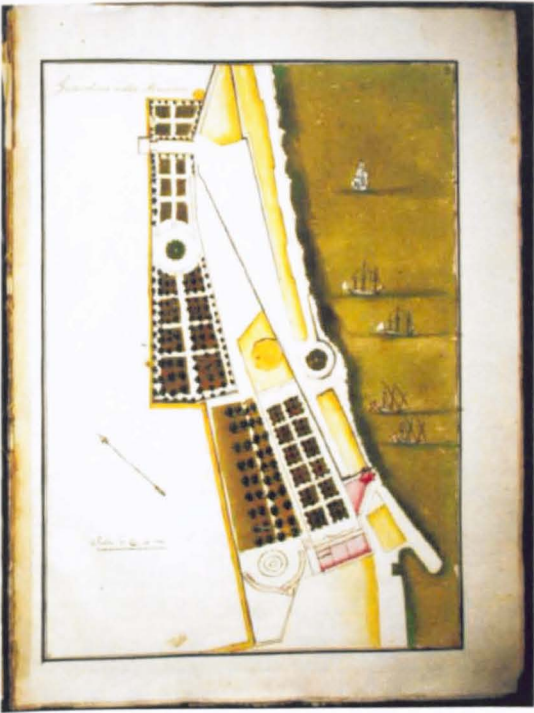


Fig. 61 *Il Giardino della Marina*, 1722. AOM 290 f.3, NLM. Detail showing Perellos's garden and gallery at bottom right.



Fig. 62 Raymond Perellos was the first Grand Master to be portrayed in a wig (right), unlike his immediate predecessor, Adrien de Wignacourt (left), and others before him.



Fig. 63 Mattia Preti, *The Triumph of the Order of St John*, c.1660. Oil on limestone, SJC, Valletta, Malta.



Fig. 64 Detail: *Grand Master Nicolas Cotoner pointing to a painting of a galley of the Order.*



Fig. 65 Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *The Sleeping Cupid*, c. 1608. Oil on canvas, 75 x 105 cm, Palazzo Pitti, Florence.



Fig. 66 Detail showing a replica of *The Sleeping Cupid*, on the lower left facade of Palazzo dell'Antella, Piazza Santa Croce, Florence.



Fig. 67 Facade of Palazzo dell'Antella, Piazza Santa Croce, Florence.



Fig. 68 Justus Sustermans, *Portrait of Francesco dell'Antella*. Oil on canvas, 58 x 43 cm, Alberto Bruschi Collection, Florence.



Fig. 69 Gobelins Manufactory, *Les Teintures des Indes – Le Chasseur Indien*, 1708. Tapestry, 470 x 359 cm, The Palace, Valletta.



Fig. 70 Detail: Giuseppe Mazzuoli, *The Baptism of Christ*, 1703. Marble, 250 cm, SJC.



Fig. 71 Francesco de Grado, *Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio* [in the habit of the Order of St John], late seventeenth century. Engraving, 19.8 x 13.3 cm, Museum of the Order of St John, London.



Fig. 72 Pierre Mignard, *Portrait of Jacques Cordon d'Evieux*, 1653. Oil on canvas, 157 x 133.5 cm, NMFA.



Fig. 73 Ludovico Cardi Cigoli, *Portrait of the artist*, with an inscription describing him as a knight of St John. Oil on canvas, Uffizi, Florence.



Fig. 74 Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *The Beheading of the Baptist*, 1608. Oil on canvas, 361 x 520 cm, The Oratory of the *Decollatio*, SJC.

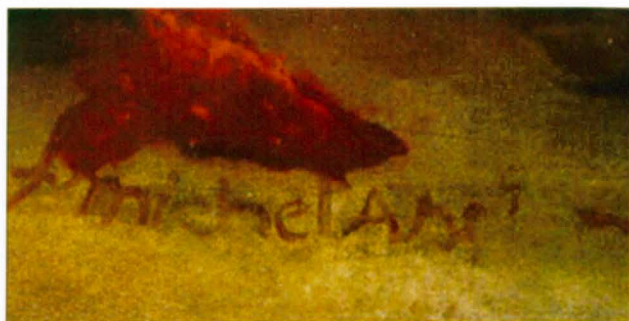


Fig. 75 Detail from *The Beheading of the Baptist* showing the artist's signature.



Fig. 76 Antoine Favray, *The Emissaries of Sultan Bajazet II presenting the relic of the Baptist's forearm to Grand Master d'Aubusson*, 1751. Oil on canvas, SJC.



Fig. 77 Antonello de Saliba, attr., *Enthroned Madonna and Child*, as restored by Pedro Nunez de Villavicencio. St Gregory Church, Zejtun.



Fig. 78 Pedro Nunez de Villavicencio, *Bali Raymond Soler*, 1674. Oil on canvas, 204 x 133 cm, NMFA.



Fig. 79 The artist's self-portrait and signature on the canvas of the painting *Bali Raymond Soler*, 1674.



Fig. 80 Mattia Preti, *Boethius and the Consolation of Philosophy*, c.1680. Oil on canvas, 185 x 294 cm, whereabouts unknown.

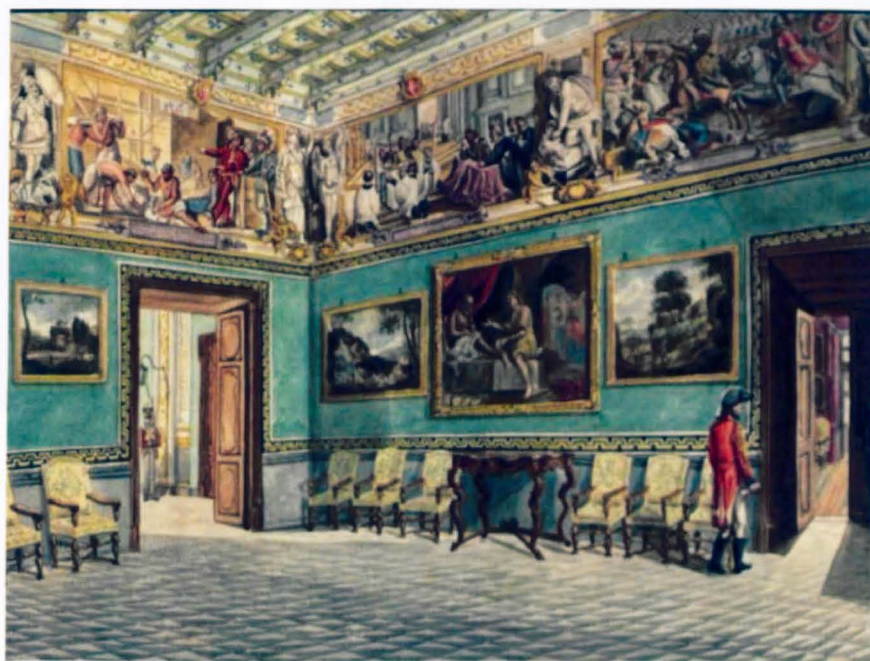


Fig. 81 C.F. De Brocktorff, *Anti-Chamber NI (No.2)*, 1829. Watercolour on paper, 19 x 30 cm, Museum of the Order of St John, London.



Fig. 82 The Palace, Valletta.



Fig. 83 San Anton Palace, Balzan.



Fig. 84 Verdala Palace, Boschetto.



Fig. 85 Roman Imperial period, *Queen Zenobia*, third century. Marble, National Museum of Archaeology, Valletta.



Fig. 86 Roman Imperial period, *Tullia and Claudia*, third century. Marble, National Museum of Archaeology, Valletta, Malta.

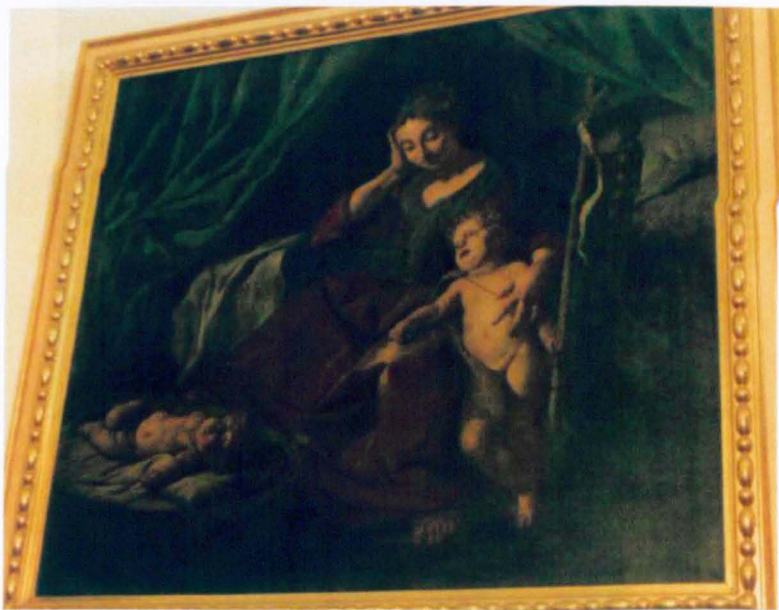


Fig. 87 Rosalia Novelli, attr., *Our Lady with a sleeping Child Jesus and St John the Baptist*, early 1600s. Oil on canvas, 205 x 184 cm, The Palace, Valletta.

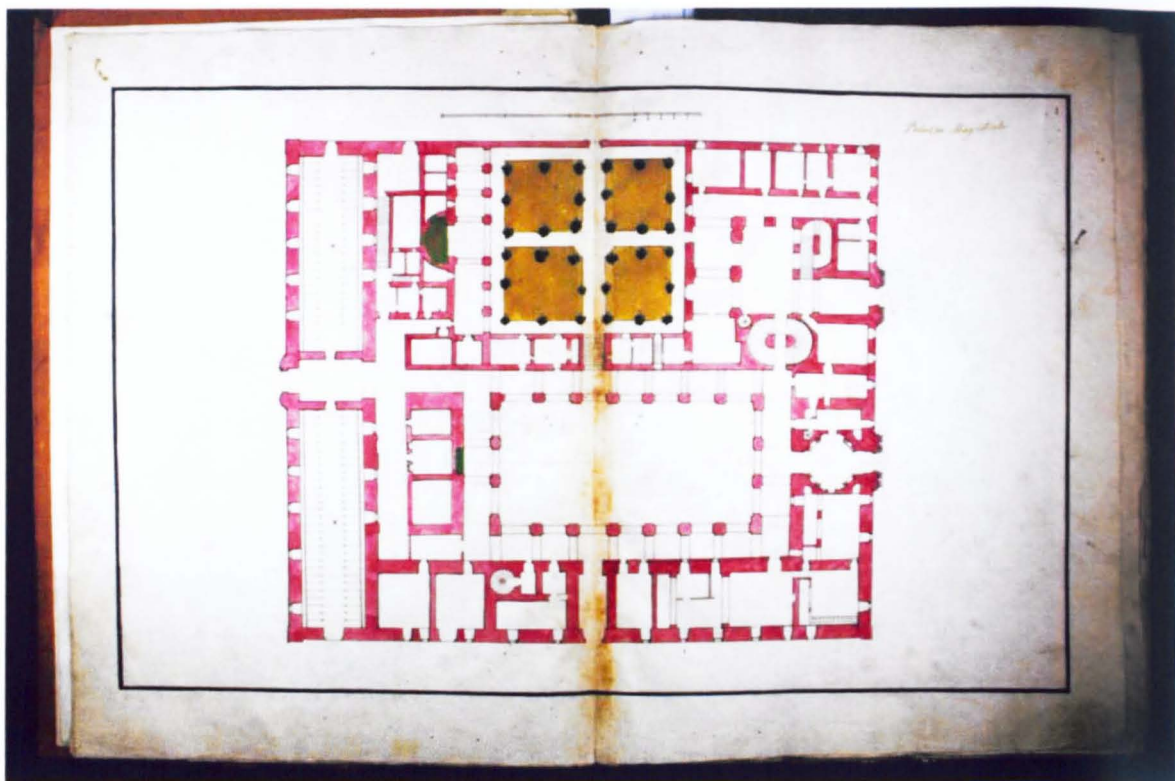


Fig. 88 Gio Francesco Bezzina, *Plan of the Magistral Palace*, 1722. Watercolour and ink on paper, AOM Treas. 290, f.1, NLM. The plan shows the two entrances on the right.



Fig. 89 The palace corridor with *trompe l'oeil* architectural ceiling decoration by Nicoló Nasoni.



Fig. 90 Pietro Paolo Troisi, *Bust of Grand Master Anton Manoel de Vilhena*, c. 1625. Bronze, Manoel Theatre Museum, Valletta.



Fig. 91 Pietro Paolo Troisi, *Full-length sculpture of Grand Master Anton Manoel de Vilhena*, c. 1625. Bronze, Floriana, Malta.



Fig. 92 Giuseppe Vermiglio, attr., *Cain and Abel*, first half seventeenth century. Oil on canvas, 199 x 163.5 cm, NMFA.



Fig. 93 Palazzo Spinola, St Julian's, Malta.



Fig. 94 Villa Bighi, Kalkara, Malta.



Fig. 95 Mattia Preti, attr., *Agony in the Garden*, c.1670. Oil on canvas, PCM.



Fig. 96 Anon., *Portraits of Hospitaller saints and blessed*, seventeenth century. Oil on canvas, 180 x 150 cm, Wignacourt College of Chaplains, Rabat.



Fig. 97 Mattia Preti, *SS Cosma and Damian*, 1698. Oil on canvas, 293 x 214 cm, SJC Museum, Valletta.



Fig. 98 Manuel Pereira, *The Coronation of the Virgin, St Paul and Grand Master Caraffa*, c.1680. Oil on canvas, 180 x 132 cm, NAM, Rabat, Malta.



Fig. 99 C. F de Brocktorff, *Business Room* [Pages Hall], 1829. Watercolour on paper, 19 x 30.2 cm, Museum of the Order of St John. The painting on the left, *Jacob's Dream* by Ribera is still displayed inside the Palace whereas the remainder are displayed inside the National Museum of Fine Arts, Valletta.

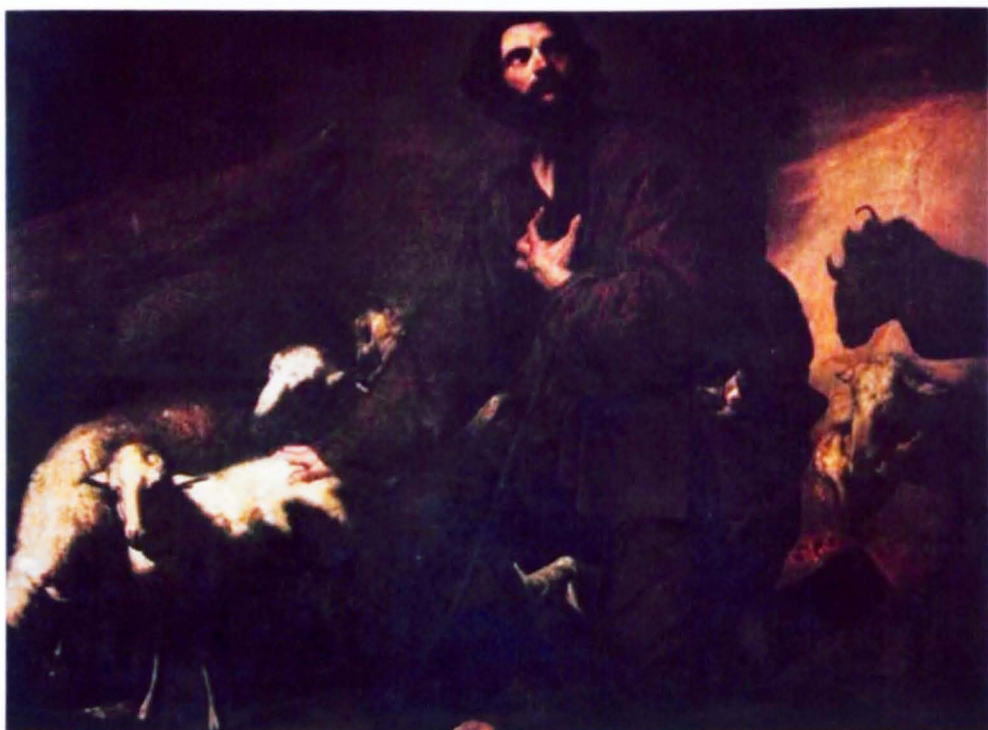


Fig. 100 Jusepe Ribera, *Jacob's Dream*, c.1650. Oil on canvas, 154 x 208 cm, The Palace, Valletta.



Fig. 101 A number of AOM 931 volumes, containing the *dispropiamenti* of Hospitaller knights. NLM.

Item Description	Revenue
Pittura di S. Antonio	1. 1
Pittura di S. Giovanni	2. 4
Pittura di S. Pietro	28. 2
Pittura di S. Paolo	2. 8. 10
Pittura di S. Andrea	6. 6
Pittura di S. Matteo	1. 2
Pittura di S. Marco	2. 6
Pittura di S. Luca	2. 6
Pittura di S. Michele	3. 6
Pittura di S. Rocco	10. 6
Pittura di S. Sebastiano	2. 4
Pittura di S. Vitale	1. 8
Pittura di S. Eustachio	3. 2
Pittura di S. Agostino	4. 9
Pittura di S. Felice	8. 1
Pittura di S. Simeone	2. 6
Pittura di S. Ippolito	5. 6
Pittura di S. Ponzio	4. 6
Pittura di S. Procolo	7. 7. 10

Fig. 102 The list of items from the *spoglio* of Fra Antoine Favray, showing the revenue that was generated by the *Comun Tesoro* from the sale. The *spoglio* included 23 paintings. AOM 949, NLM.



Fig. 103 Filippo Gherardi and Giovanni Coli, *Sophonisba receiving a message from Massinissa*, c.1680s. Oil on canvas, 57 x 90 cm, NMFA.



Fig. 104 Pedro Nunez de Villaviçençio, *Portrait of Bali Raymond Soler*, 1674. Oil on canvas, 204 x 133 cm, NMFA.



Fig. 105 J.P.L. Houel, *Preparatory Drawings of low-reliefs at the Palace of the Grand Master*, 1782-1787. The Hermitage, St Petersburg.



Fig. 106 J.P.L. Houel, *Preparatory Drawings of low-reliefs at the Palace of the Grand Master*, 1782-1787. The Hermitage, St Petersburg.



Fig. 107 J.P.L. Houel, *Vases Antiques en Terre cuite qui sont dans la Galerie du Palais du Grand Maître de la Religion en Malte*. Engraving, published in *Voyages Pittoresques*, 1782-87.



Fig. 108 J.P.L. Houel, *Fragments d'Architecture et de Figures Antiques qui se conservent dans la Bibliothèque publique de Malte*. Engraving, 1782-87.



Fig. 109 J.P.L. Houel, *Débris d'Architecture et de figures antique, trouves en differents endroits du Malte et du Goze*. Engraving, published in *Voyages Pittoresques*, 1782-1787.

Exdem
 Simone Spileta publico precone della gran corte della Castellania ha riferito p^o ordine delli Sudⁱ B^{li} Comm^{ry} delli spogli d'haver fatto simile bando come sopra si contiene nelli luoghi pp^a soliti e consueti di questa città valletta multa indue populi congregata audiente e intelligente unde j

Fig. 110 ACM, Sentenze Vol. 3 (1614-28): 'Codem' Simone Spileta publico pre core della Gran Corte della Castellania ha riferito p ordine delli Sud i B.li Comm.ry delli spogli d'haver fatto simile bando come di sopra si contiene nelli lochi publici soliti e consueti di qsta Citta Valletta, multitude populi sono [...] congregate, and te et intelligente'.

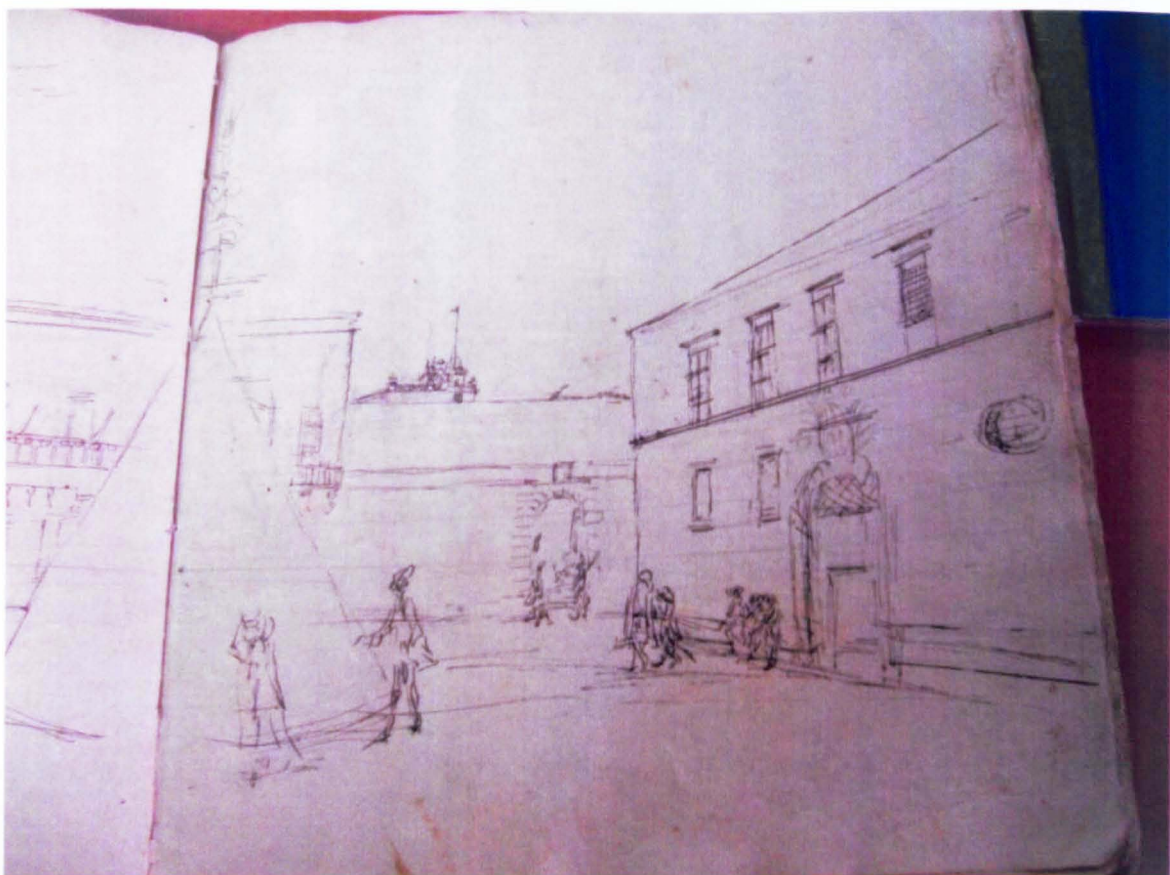


Fig. 111 Anon., *The Building of the Treasury*, before 1740. Drawing, Latoucheon Album, NMFA. The former two-storey building was occupied by the *Comun Tesoro* (right), next to the Magistral Palace, prior to its demolition to make way for the *Bibliotheca* of the Order (1790s).



Fig. 112 Genevoli Sabbineso, *Portrait of the Landgrave Friedrich of Hessen-Darmstadt*, 1644. Oil on canvas, 286 x 186cm, The Palace.



Fig. 113 Stefano Erardi, *The Martyrs of Nagasaki*, second half seventeenth century. Oil on canvas, Jesuits Church, Valletta.



Fig. 114 *The Guardian Angel*, copy of the original found in the Cathedral of Seville by Mattia Preti. Oil on canvas, 183 x 131 cm, NMFA.



Fig. 115 Mattia Preti (after Guido Reni), *St Michael the Archangel*, c.1670. Oil on canvas, 311 x 215 cm, The Chapel of the Langue of Provence, SJC.

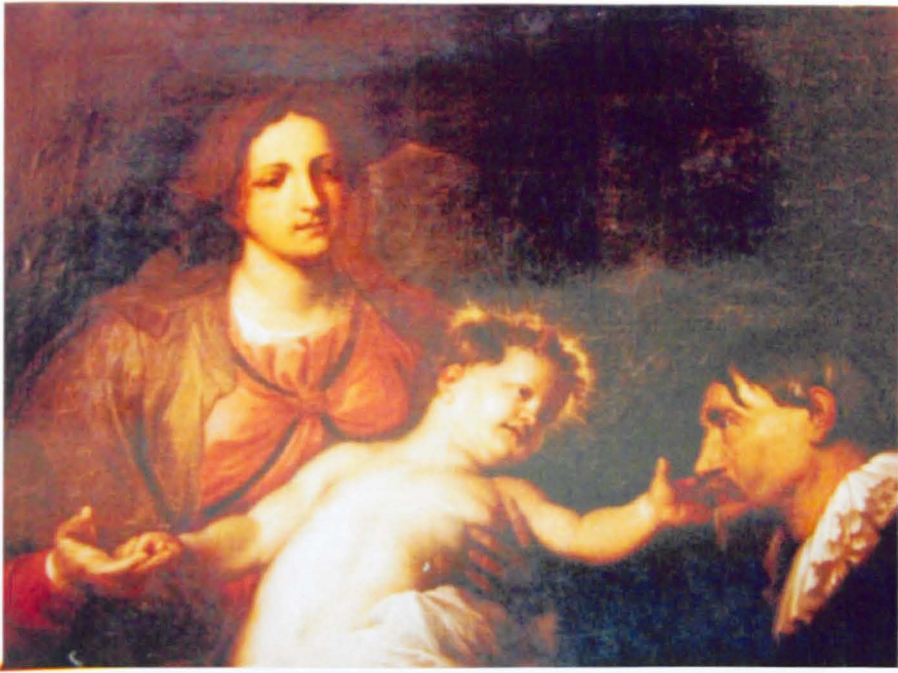


Fig. 116 Anon., *Blessed Virgin with the Child Jesus caressing the face of a patron*, seventeenth century. Oil on canvas, NMFA, Valletta.



Fig. 117 Antony Van Dyck's *Virgin with Donors*, c. 1630. Oil on canvas, 250 x 191 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Fig. 118 Mattia Preti, *The young St John the Baptist in the habit of the Order*. Oil on canvas, 99 x 77cm, NMFA.

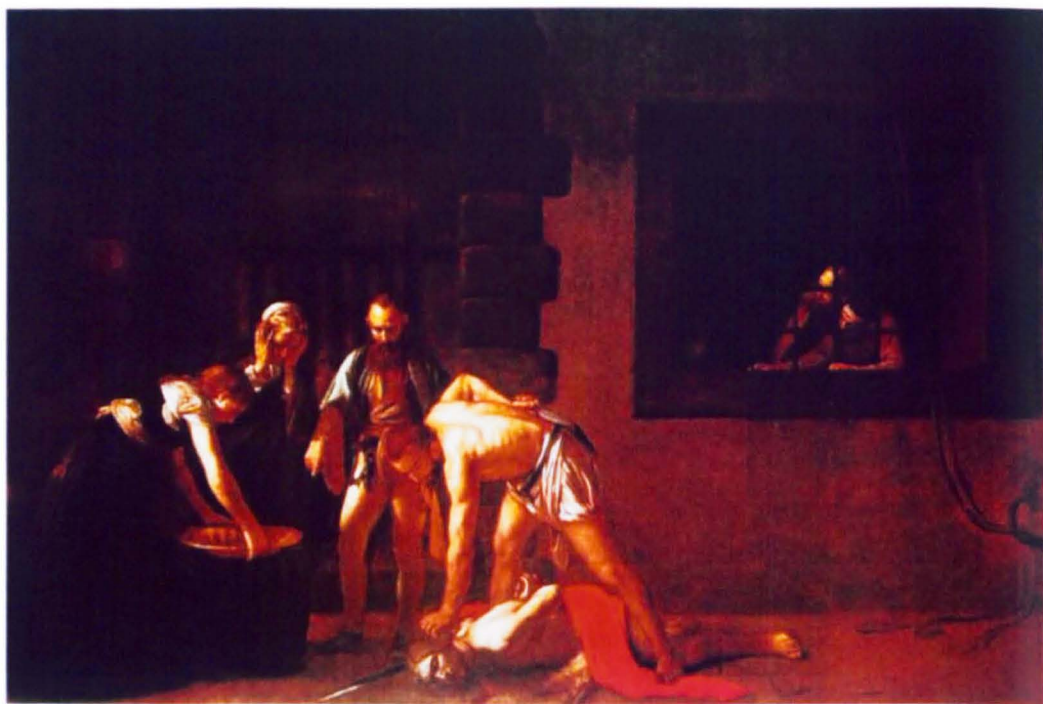


Fig. 119 Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *The Beheading of the Baptist*, 1608. Oil on canvas, 361x520 cm, The Oratory of the *Decollatio*, SJC.

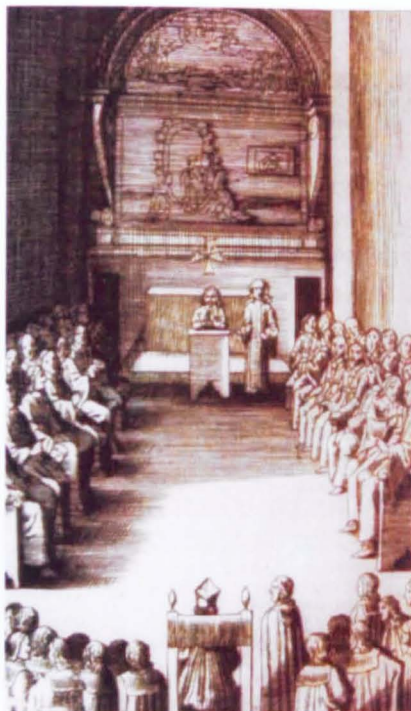


Fig. 120 Wolfgang Kilian, *The Oratory of the Decollatio*, 1650. Engraving, from C. Osterhausen, *Eigentlicher und gründlicher Bericht dressen ...* (Augsburg, 1650).



Fig. 121 Mattia Preti, *John the Baptist Beheaded*, 1666. Oil on canvas, 76 x 133 cm, The Archbishop's Palace, Seville.

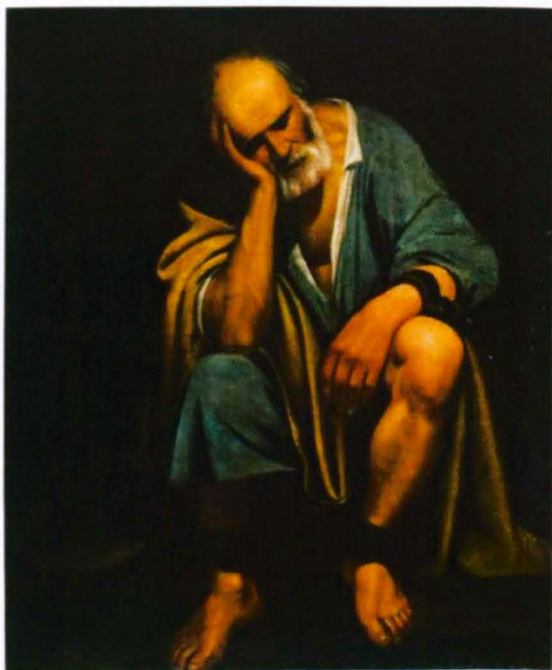


Fig. 122 Johann Ulrich Loth, attr., *St Peter in Chains*, first half seventeenth century. 100 x 80 cm, Verdala Palace, Boschetto.

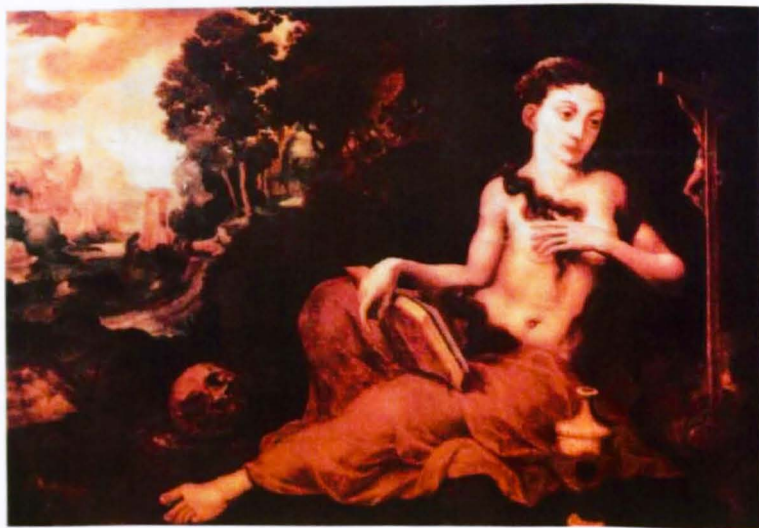


Fig. 123 Circle of Marten van Heemskerck, *St Mary Magdalen*, sixteenth century. Oil on panel, 89 x 120 cm, NMFA.



Fig. 124 Anon., *Santa Flora* and *Allegory of the Order of Malta – Charity*, eighteenth century. Oil on canvas, 64 x 49 cm, NMFA.



Fig. 125 Alessio Erardi, attr., *Vestire Nudos*, early eighteenth century. Oil on canvas, The Palace.

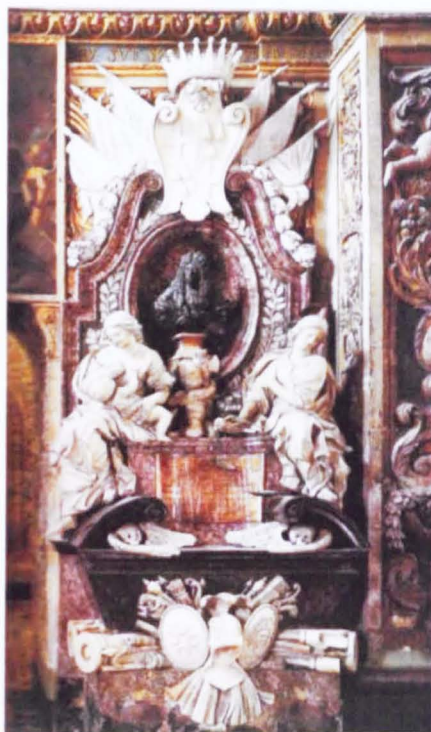


Fig. 126 Giuseppe Mazzuoli, *Funerary monument for Grand Master Perellos*, early eighteenth century. Marble, SJC.



Fig. 127 Anon., *Exterior View of St John's Church with a procession*, before 1660. Oil on canvas, 121 x 159 cm, NMFA.



Fig. 128 Antonello Riccio, *Madonna of the Fleet: The Battle of Lepanto*, 1570s. Oil on panel, 210 x 138 cm, Maritime Museum of Malta.



Fig. 129 Circle of Mattia Preti, *The Legend of Ismeria*, late seventeenth century. Oil on canvas, c.75 x 100 cm, St Dominic's Convent, Valletta.



Fig. 130 Anon., *Aerial View of Valletta and the two Harbours* c.1740. Oil on canvas, 158 x 239 cm, NMFA.



Fig. 131 Anon., *Aerial View of Valletta and the two Harbours*, early eighteenth century. Oil on canvas, Wallace Collection, London.



Fig. 132 Bernardo Poccetti, *A Military Architect's workshop*, early seventeenth century. Fresco.



Fig. 133 Fra Carlos Grunenbergh, *Stone Model of Fort St Elmo*, 1681-1690. Limestone, 100 x 120 cm, The Palace Armoury, Valletta.

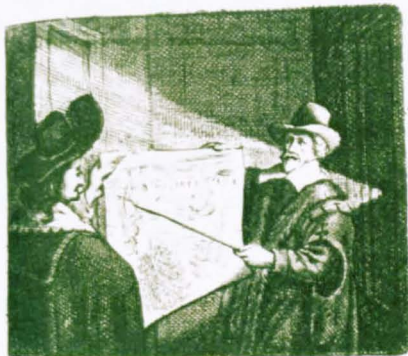


Fig. 134 Johan van Beverwyck, *Illustration of the working of the eye* in *Schat der Ongesonthey*, Amsterdam, 1667.



Fig. 135 Leonello Spada, *The Capture of Rhodes in 1309*, 1610. Fresco, Pages Hall, The Palace.

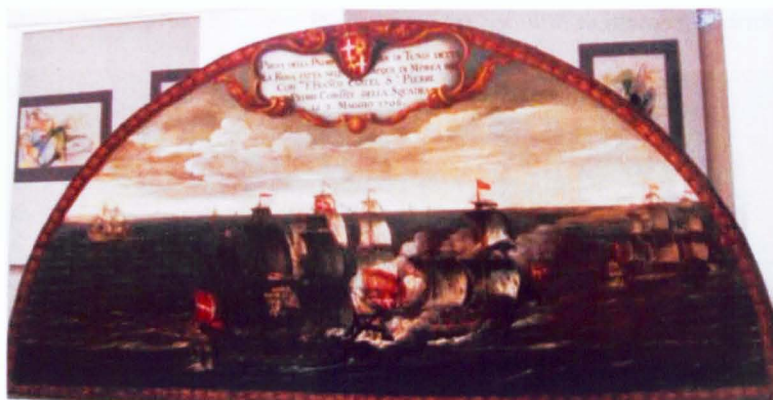


Fig. 136 Anon., *Naval engagement of the Order in 1706*, early eighteenth. Oil on canvas, 200 x 400 cm, The Palace.

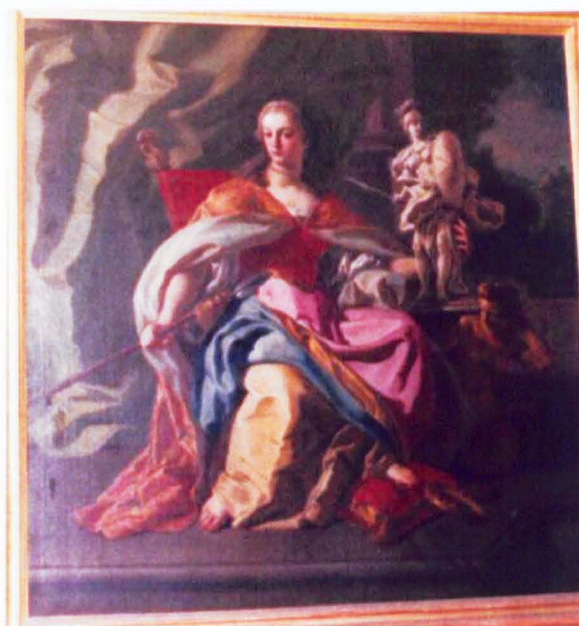


Fig. 137 Francesco de Mura, *Allegory of the Order of Malta*, eighteenth century. Oil on canvas, 176 x 177 cm, NMFA.



Fig. 138 Pietro Testa, *Allegoria dell'Ordine di Malta*, before 1650. Oil on canvas, 264 x 187 cm, Palazzo Altieri, Rome.



Fig. 139 Mattia Preti, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*, 1670s. Oil on canvas, 211 x 263, NMFA.



Fig. 140 Mattia Preti, *Death of Lucretia*, 1660s. Oil on canvas, 209 x 155 cm, Palazzo Falson, Malta.

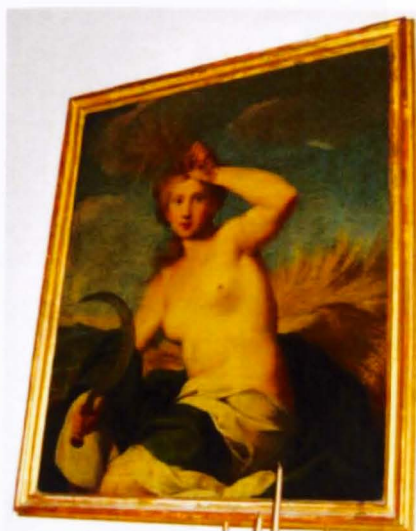


Fig. 141 Anon., *Allegories of the Four Seasons*, mid-seventeenth century. Oil on canvas, San Anton Palace.



Fig. 142 School of Preti, *Allegory of Truth uncovered by Time*, late seventeenth century. Oil on canvas, The Palace.



Fig. 143 Anon., *La Science*, early eighteenth century. Oil on canvas, 181 x 161 cm, The Palace.



Fig. 144 Anon., *L'Industrie*, early eighteenth century. Oil on canvas, 181 x 161 cm, The Palace.



Fig. 145 Laurent Cars, *Jean Philippe, Chevalier d'Orleans, Grand Prior of France*, 1726. Engraving, 21.5 x 15.3 cm, Museum of St John, London.



Fig. 146 Jan van Beecq, *English ship of the Line*, 1679. Oil on canvas, 54 x 92 cm, NMFA.



Fig. 147 Anon., *The Duchess of Portsmouth*, eighteenth century. Oil on canvas, 150 x 190 cm, San Anton Palace.



Fig. 148 Antoine Favray, *Grand Master de Rohan*, 1780s. Oil on canvas, 286 x 217 cm, NMFA.



Fig. 149 Antoine Favray, *Bali de Schauenberg*, late eighteenth century. Oil on canvas, 249 x 185 cm, NMFA.



Fig. 150 Antoine Francois Callet, *Louis XVI*, 1784. Oil on canvas, Ambassadors' Hall, The Palace.



Fig. 151 Anon., *St. Casimir*, seventeenth century. Oil on canvas, 97 x 124 cm, NMFA.



Fig. 152 Mattia Preti, *Sta Flora*, 1660s. Oil on limestone, SJC.



Fig. 153 Peter Paul Rubens, *The Landing of Marie de Médicis at Marseilles*, 1623-25. Oil on canvas, 394 x 295 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Fig. 154 Antoine Favray, *Grand Master Jean de Vallette*, 1750s. Oil on canvas, Pages Hall, The Palace.



Fig. 155 Pinturicchio, *Portrait of Alberto Aringhieri*, 1504-1506. Fresco, The Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta, Chapel of Saint John the Baptist.



Fig. 156 Anon., *Portrait of Grand Master Adrien de Wignacourt*, 1690s. Oil on canvas, The Palace.



Fig. 157 Antoine Favray, *Portrait of Grand Master Pinto*, 1748. Oil on canvas, SJC.



Fig. 158 Antonio Xuereb, *Portrait of Grand Master Hompesch*, 1798. Oil on canvas, The Palace, Valletta.



Fig. 159 Pompeo Batoni, *Pierre André de Suffren de Saint Tropez*, 1786. Oil on canvas, Palais de Versailles, Paris.



Fig. 160 Mattia Preti, *Martyrdom of St Catherine of Alexandria*, 1670s. Oil on canvas, NMFA.



Fig. 161 Johann Rottenhammer, *Vanitas*, sixteenth century. Oil on copper, 50 x 42 cm, NMFA.

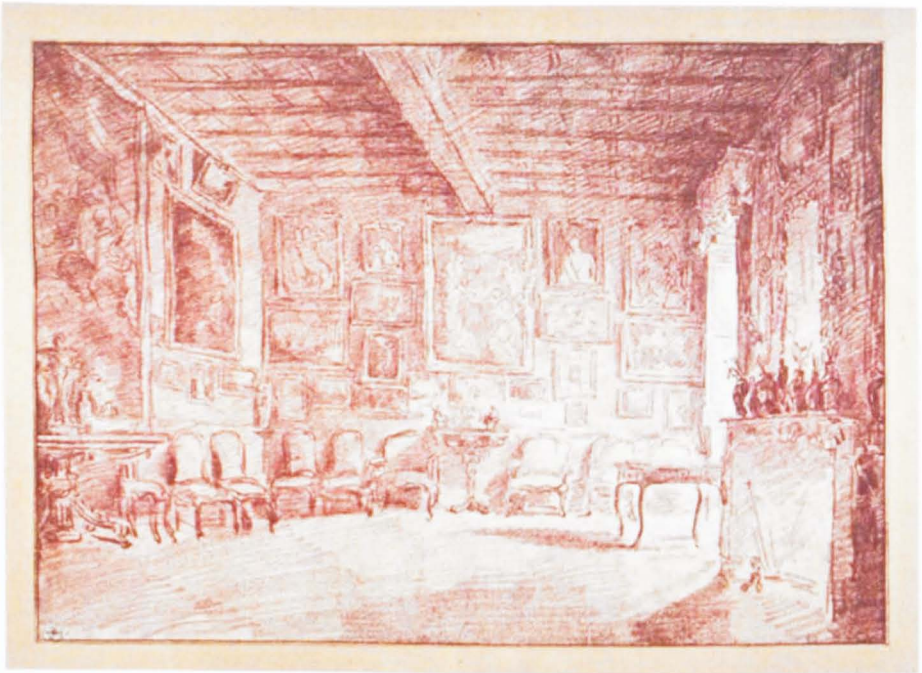


Fig. 162 Hubert Robert, *Le Salon du bailli de Breteuil à Rome*, 1740s. Sanguine on paper, Musée du Louvre, Paris.